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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN AIKIN, M. D.

BY LUCY AIKIN.

WITH A SELECTION OF HIS

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES,

BIOGRAPHICAL, MORAL AND CRITICAL.

PHILADELPHIA:
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PREFACE.

A FEW words will suffice to explain to the reader the object of the present publication, and the plan on which it has been conducted.

To make known to the world as a *man* one with whom it had so long been acquainted as an *author*, appeared to the editor both a due tribute to the talents and virtues of her father, and a proper indulgence of a species of curiosity not less reasonable than it is natural.

The generally even tenor of Dr. Aikin's life, and the retirement from active pursuits in which the latter years of it were passed, seemed to her no sufficient objections to making it the theme of a detailed narration ;—for, besides that a man of merit, in any class, and under any circumstances, may be accounted a worthy object of contemplation to his fellow men,—it is well known that some of the most instructive and acceptable pieces of biography have been such as derived their interest from the unfoldings of character and sentiment, rather than the bustle of incident, or the splendour of description.

Nothing, however, could be further from her design than to intrude upon the attention of the public by the introduction of anecdotes or observations not strictly connected with the subject of the memoir, and by which its effect as a *moral portraiture* would be rather weakened than enforced; on this account, only such extracts from Dr. Aikin's correspondence have been admitted, as appeared essential to the history of his life, or the exhibition of his opinions and feelings on important topics; and in the composition of the memoir itself, a similar forbearance has been exercised.

But the judgments passed by a man upon the moral and intellectual qualities of those with whom he lived or acted, form a very important feature in his own character; and several such judgments of Dr. Aikin's have here been recorded, by appending to his own memoir those biographical accounts of several of the most distinguished of his literary friends which it fell to his lot to compose. From these, a competent idea may be formed of his mode of estimating various kinds of merit and excellence; and it is hoped that the suppression of such proofs of his just appreciation of *living worth*, as his private letters and the recollection of his conversation would readily have supplied to the editor, will be ascribed to none but its true motives—delicacy towards individuals, and respect for the implied confidences of family intercourse.

The remaining contents of this volume, consisting of critical essays on several of the English poets, and of a selection of miscellaneous papers, have already appeared before the public;—the essays, except that on Gondibert, in the shape of prefaces to editions of the respective poets,—the miscellaneous papers, as contributions to different periodical works. But it was believed that it would prove agreeable to many readers to find that which was dispersed, collected, and that which was anonymous, avowed; and the editor was solicitous that the knowledge of what appeared to her some of the choicest products of her father's pen, should thus be revived and extended.

The subjoined list of Dr. Aikin's principal works is appended as a kind of summary of his efforts in the cause of useful knowledge and elegant literature.

Observations on the external Use of Preparations of Lead, with some general Remarks on Topical Medicines.
Thoughts on Hospitals.
Essays on Song-writing, with a Collection of such English Songs as are most eminent for poetical merit.
Miscellaneous Pieces in prose, (written in conjunction with Mrs. Barbauld.)
An Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry.
The Manners of the Germans, and the Life of Agricola, translated from Tacitus, with copious Notes.
Translation of Baumé's Manuel de Chymie.
Biographical Memoirs of Medicine in Great Britain to the time of Harvey.
Lewis's Materia Medica, re-edited with large additions.
A Manual of Materia Medica.
England Delineated.
Poems.
A View of the Character and public services of J. Howard, Esq.
Evenings at Home, (written in conjunction with Mrs. Barbauld.)
Letters from a Father to his Son on various topics relative to Literature and the Conduct of Life.
A Description of the Country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester.
General Biography, in 10 vols. 4to. (The articles marked *A.* amounting to nearly half the work)
Select Eulogies of the Members of the French Academy, by D'Alembert, translated ; with a Preface and Notes.
The Arts of Life.
The Woodland Companion, or an Account of British Forest Trees.
Translation of Zschokke's Account of the Destruction of the Democratical Cantons of Switzerland ; with a Preface and Supplement.
Letters to a Young Lady on a course of English Poetry.

Geographical Delineations.

Memoirs of the Life of Huet by himself, translated from the Latin, with copious Notes, biographical and critical.

Vocal Poetry. (A much altered edition of Essays on Song-writing.)

Essays, Literary and Miscellaneous.

The Lives of John Selden and of Archbishop Usher, with Biographical Notes.

Annals of the Reign of George III.

Select Works of the British Poets, with biographical and critical Prefaces.

Stoke Newington, June, 1823.

MEMOIR

OF

JOHN AIKIN, M. D.

JOHN AIKIN, only son of the Rev. John Aikin, D. D. by Jane his wife, daughter of the Rev. John Jennings, teacher of a dissenting academy at Kibworth, was born at the same village of Kibworth-Harcourt, in Leicestershire, on January 15, 1747. His father, whom he never mentioned but with reverence, was the son of a native of Scotland settled as a shopkeeper in London; originally destined for a commercial life, he had occupied for a short time the situation of a French clerk in a merchant's counting-house, when, the air of London disagreeing with his health, he was placed for a time as a pupil with Dr. Doddridge, who succeeded Mr. Jennings in his academy, and afterwards removed it to Northampton. In this situation the bent of his mind towards learning so strongly manifested itself, that he obtained his father's permission to change his views and devote himself to the Christian ministry. After finishing his course with Dr. Doddridge, he completed with distinction an extensive plan of study at the University of Aberdeen, and became Dr. Doddridge's assistant on his return. A respectable congregation at Leicester soon afterwards elected him their pastor; but just as he was entering upon the duties of his office, a disease of the lungs permanently incapacitated him as a preacher, and rendered him a valetudinarian for life.

Under these unfortunate circumstances, no other line of life remained open to him than that of an instructor of youth; and after a short period of partnership with a gentleman of the name of Lee, he married, and opened a school of his own at Kibworth, which his diligence, his learning and abilities, and, above all, the excellence of his moral character, soon raised into repute. His two children, Mrs. Barbauld and the subject of this Memoir, were born to him while occupying this station of modest usefulness; and, next to the happiness of being the child of such a parent, his son always esteemed it his highest privilege to have been the pupil of such a teacher. He would also mention that his father was careful to guard him against the peculiar temptations and inconveniences attending the situation of a schoolmaster's son; strictly forbearing to question him on any occasion respecting the behaviour of his young companions, and strongly impressing him with the meanness of tale-bearing: so completely, he added, was he regarded as one of the boys, that he was more than once appointed by the rest to stand sentinel while they were engaged in stripping his father's fruit trees.

The merit of the Rev. Mr. Aikin was at length the means of recommending him to a situation more worthy of him. A dissenting academy on a liberal plan having been set up at Warrington in Lancashire, the trustees invited him to undertake the office of classical tutor; this he accepted, and in the year 1756 removed thither with his family.

His son, though only in his 12th year was so forward in his learning that he was immediately entered among the students and attended the lectures of his father and the other tutors. Three diligent years past in this situation, enabled him to add a considerable superstructure of various knowledge to the firm grammatical foundation previously laid at Kibworth, and, what was of still more importance, imbued him indelibly with that love of letters which became at once the ornament and safeguard of his youth, and the occupation and solace of every succeeding period of his life. It was intended by this learned education to fit him for the study of divinity; but the weakness of his voice, and perhaps the native vivacity of his temper, caused a change in his destination; he made his option in favour of the medical profession, and was in consequence articled to Mr. Garthshore, a surgeon and apothecary in considerable practice at Uppingham, in Rutlandshire.

There was no portion of his time which, on the review of life, Dr. Aikin regarded with so little complacency as the three important years he was doomed to drag on in this irksome and uninstructive situation. To have placed him in it, he regarded as an error of judgment ascribable to a prepossession, frequent among parents of a serious turn and small acquaintance with the world, to which he observed that many young men within the sphere of his acquaintance had fallen lamentable victims. This prepossession consists in an undue preference of remote and obscure situations for youths during the period of apprenticeship, as sheltered from the temptations of great towns and cities, and comparatively favourable to innocence and virtue. "What," he would say, "can you possibly do worse with a youth than send him, from the comforts of a lettered and civilised home, to a master, probably of sordid habits, in a place where he *can* find none but gross and vulgar company if he seeks for any, and where sotting and low vice will be the only pastimes offered him for the amusement of his hours of leisure?" Such a situation nearly, was his own at Uppingham, where he did not form a single intimacy. An elder apprentice, little congenial in manners or studies, was the only companion of his own class that the place afforded; the inn was the sole place of social recreation, and the landlord's daughter "the Cynosure of neighbouring eyes." Nothing but his strong love of literature, and the conscious superiority with which it already inspired him, could probably have saved him at this time from sinking into a state of melancholy listlessness, though the restraints of morality and religion should have withheld him from rushing to degradation and ruin. But this preservative proved, happily, effectual; he applied himself with diligence and remarkable success to the business of his profession, conciliated by his excellent qualities and pleasing manners the esteem and affection of the family in which he was domesticated, and fulfilled this period of his probation creditably, if not happily.

The monotony of his residence at Uppingham was, however, occasionally broken by visits to the neighbouring town of Leicester, made under circumstances peculiarly conducive both to his pleasure and improvement. Mr. Pulteney, a particular friend of his father's, and, through his introduction, of Mr. Garthshore's, a man of a highly cultivated and philosophical mind and great sensibility of heart, was settled as an apothecary at this place;

and on particular emergencies he sometimes requested to borrow the assistance of his friend's pupil, Mr. Aikin. This was always granted with alacrity; if Mr. Pulteney was at home, his conversation was rich in enjoyment to a youth who pined after the lettered intercourse of his father's house; if, as was more frequently the case, he was absent, Leicester was not destitute of a small circle of acquaintance capable of affording him high gratification, and in which he was received with distinguished kindness, at first for his father's sake, and afterwards for his own. It was here that he first tasted the charms of cultivated female society, which in after life formed so great a portion of his enjoyment; one lady in particular, who, exemplary in the relations of wife and mother, had yet a heart for friendship and talents for society, was long his standard of excellence for her sex; and it was perhaps somewhat owing to this early impression, that he always placed the qualities of the understanding unusually high in his estimate of female perfection.

Mr. Aikin had not completed the third year of his term at Uppingham, when Mr. Garthshore made over his business to a successor, having determined to take a doctor's degree at Edinburgh. He prevailed upon Mr. Pulteney to adopt a similar resolution; but as it was this gentleman's purpose to return to Leicester, it was agreed that Mr. Aikin should take charge of his patients during his absence; and he spent on this occasion two or three happy months in that town; afterwards, there was no adequate motive for his remaining at Uppingham, and he was thus freed from his indentures two or three years earlier than the usual period.

At the immature age, as he afterwards regarded it, of eighteen he was now sent to pursue his medical studies at the University of Edinburgh, then in high repute, and boasting the distinguished names of Black, Monro and Cullen, among its professors. This was, on the whole, a happy period of his life; he rejoiced in his liberation from a state of irksome dependence; he was animated by the society of companions eager in the same occupations and the same amusements, and prone, like himself, to knit those bonds of friendships which double the pleasures of youth, and often survive to soothe the cares of maturer life; above all, he entered with ardour into the business of the place, and daily saw fresh reason to congratulate himself on his choice of a profession. An agreeable picture of the state of his mind at this period, is afforded by the following passage of a letter to his dearest friend, —his affectionate and accomplished sister:

"This I can assure you, I never found study so agreeable to me as at present. I am very much surprised the study of the structure and uses of the parts of the human body, is not taken into the plan of a learned education; surely, no part of knowledge can be more noble and entertaining, and more proper for the employment of the faculties; what a pity the mind and body should be so little acquainted with each other! It is indeed a subject full of doubts and difficulties; but if men of genius were to apply to it, I should think great discoveries might be made. I often regret Sir Isaac Newton was not an anatomist.

"My only books of amusement are the Latin poets; and among them the elegant and tender Tibullus is my present favourite. I never met with so much softness, such inexpressibly tender strokes, as in his elegies; in my opinion there are some single lines of his worth all the works of all the poets of his class put together. It is a pity there is no good translation of him; Hammond indeed has taken a good deal from him with the true spirit of the original. Of what real consequence, my dear sister, is something of a taste for polite literature! It promotes cheerfulness with innocence; and by that means is an excellent guard against running into vicious pleasures, and against being unfitted by hard study and low spirits for social life. Its chief fault is, being apt to make people vain; and perhaps you will think it has had that effect with me when I tell you, that with the means of bread in my hands, and pleasure in my head, I despise the dull tradesman with his thousands, the country booby with his dogs and horses; and, above all, the mere town rake, whose pleasures are meaner and more mistaken."

After two winters and the intermediate summer spent in this school of medicine, Mr. Aikin, in May, 1766, quitted Scotland, and went to pass a few months of leisure, but by no means of idleness, under the paternal roof. The flourishing state of the Warrington academy at this period, had redeemed this remote spot from barbarism, and rendered it a favourite haunt of the muses. Among the students were several youths of promising abilities and ingenuous manners, who, in after life, reflected honour on the place of their education, both by their acquirements and their lasting attachment to their teachers. The tutors were, for the mathematics, Mr. Holt, a man whose whole soul was absorbed by his science; for modern languages and some other branches of knowledge, Dr. Reinhold Forster, the naturalist, who afterwards accompanied Captain Cook in his circumnavigation; the Rev. Mr. Aikin, on the death of the celebrated Dr. John Taylor, had succeeded to the post of tutor in divinity, and lectured with distinguished ability in ethics and metaphysics as well as in theology; and the department of classics and polite literature was filled by Dr. Priestley. An excellent set of lectures in history, afterwards published, was delivered by this eminent person, who had also recently constructed his ingenious biographical chart; and, with that versatility which distinguished his powerful genius, was studying the phenomena of electricity, and commencing his original experiments on that branch of natural philosophy. The most cordial intimacy subsisted among the tutors and their families, with whom also the elder students associated on terms of easy and affectionate intercourse; and while the various branches of human knowledge occupied their graver hours, the moments of recreation were animated by sports of wit and ingenuity, well adapted to nerve the wing of youthful genius.

But the claims of an active profession quickly summoned away Mr. Akin from the tranquil pursuits of learned leisure; circumstances also required of him the renewed sacrifice of that independence which he had enjoyed under the free system of a Scotch university; and he submitted, without repining, to become once more a pupil, under Mr. Charles White, a skilful surgeon then rising to eminence at Manchester.

Few situations of the kind could have been better adapted to promote either his improvement or his happiness. The extensive private practice of Mr. White, and his connection with a large infirmary, allowed his pupil full scope for that love of employment which marked him at all periods of his life; no disagreeable services of any kind were imposed upon him, and he found himself treated in the family in all respects as a gentleman. The town of Manchester, also, afforded him respectable and agreeable society to fill the intervals of business and study; and he had the good fortune to form a few congenial friendships, which ended only with the lives of the parties. Among those with whom his connection was most intimate and durable, may be named, the late Mr. Thomas Henry, Mr. James Touchet, the late T. B. Bayley, Esq. of Hope, and the late Thomas Percival,

M. D. who was previously known to him at Warrington, and as a fellow-student at Edinburgh.

Professional pursuits took the lead with him at this time even in his voluntary studies, and he mentions in one of his letters that he seldom transgressed the rule of occupying a portion, at least, of each day's reading in medical works. He translated from the French the whole of Pouteau's Mélanges de Chirurgie,* and composed an Essay on the Ligature of Arteries, afterwards published with Mr. White's Cases in Surgery.

But the muses still held divided empire in his heart; his correspondence with his sister was thickly interspersed with critical remarks on the Latin and English poets, not forgetting, among the latter, our early English dramatists, Massinger, Shirley, and Beaumont and Fletcher, whom some happy chance had introduced to his acquaintance, and for whom he had the courage to express all his admiration, at a period when the French taste had banished them almost entirely both from the stage and the closet. He also began to occupy himself in forming his collection of the choicest songs in our language; and he frequently exercised his own pen, both in verse and prose, in translation and in original composition, trying experiments in different styles, treating a variety of subjects, and seeking to discover where his strength lay. A few of these juvenile effusions he communicated anonymously to a London newspaper, and thus tasted the lively gratification of first seeing himself in print. To his sister, the beloved confidant of all his projects, he writes thus on this subject: "I look upon these little essays as the first flights of young birds, which give them boldness and skill to take hereafter a larger circle. I have a strong notion of becoming an author some time or other, though, ten to one, without half the knowledge of my subject that my father has of many on which he is too diffident to give his sentiments to the world."

After a residence of three years in Manchester, he quitted it with sentiments of attachment to its inhabitants which never forsook him, and which were warmly returned on their parts.

To complete his preparation for practice in the branch which he had chosen, that of surgery, nothing was now wanting but an attendance of a few months on the Hospital Lectures in London;

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* This translation was never published.

and thither he bent his course in the winter of the year 1769, and became one of the class of Dr. William Hunter. His maternal uncle, Mr. Arthur Jennings, then resident in Bloomsbury Square, offered him a home in his house during his abode in London; and it was to the opportunities of domestic intercourse afforded by this situation, that he ultimately owed what he justly regarded as the prime blessing of his life—his marriage. The object of his choice was Martha, youngest daughter of his worthy uncle by Martha Cornwall his first wife; and he quitted London in the ensuing spring, full of those tender anticipations of conjugal felicity which suited his age and the sensibility of his temper, and which, in this instance, were destined to experience no disappointment; and anxious only to place himself as speedily as possible in such a situation as might authorise him to claim the promised prize.

The city of Chester was mentioned to him as affording a fair prospect of success in his professional career, and thither he repaired in the autumn of 1770. No proper efforts were wanting on his part to render himself known and acceptable in this new scene of action; he mixed freely with the good society of the place, enjoying greatly the ease and cheerfulness by which it was at that time distinguished; formed several respectable and agreeable intimacies, and gave proofs of his professional abilities by publishing "Observations on the external use of preparations of lead, with some general remarks on topical medicines;" a piece which speedily passed into a second edition, and is still esteemed by good judges a model in its kind.

But he soon became sensible that the ground was pre-occupied at Chester in a manner which left no space for the exertions of a new comer; and after a trial of somewhat more than a year, he quitted the place. Warrington, in the residence of parents whom he revered and loved, in the pleasing associations of youthful days, and in the presence of the academy with its atmosphere of science and literature, possessed unrivalled attractions for him; whose worldly wishes were bounded to a modest competence, while he sought his happiness in elegant and useful knowledge, in the intercourse of a few congenial associates, and the affection of those connected with him by the dearest ties. To Warrington, therefore, he returned, where his natural connections speedily introduced him to moderate business. In the mean time, his short residence at Chester had been productive of many advantages. Besides greatly extending his general acquaintance in the neighbourhood, it had introduced him to some peculiarly valuable connections. It was there that he first became known to that able naturalist and topographer, that lively writer, most agreeable companion, and worthy man, the late Thomas Pennant, Esq. In his various tours and journeys this gentleman frequently passed through Warrington during Mr. Aikin's residence there; and he has acknowledged in print, the information which he received from him on his various topics of local inquiry. An intercourse which was found mutually useful and pleasing was not suffered to languish; Mr. Aikin willingly superintended the printing of such of Mr. Pennant's works as issued from Eyres's press at Warrington; and afterwards, when they were more widely separated in their places of abode, letters were frequently exchanged between them, principally on subjects connected with Mr. Pennant's various pursuits. Into most of these Mr. Aikin entered with deep interest. A value for information of the kind which would now be called *statistical*, was early observable among his predilections, and afterwards produced good fruits to the world. That general taste for the objects of natural history, which was not only a source of pure and elevated enjoyment to himself through all the periods of advancing life, but the inspirer of some of the most agreeable and instructive portions of his various writings, was either first excited, or at least chiefly fostered by his connection with Mr. Pennant, and the study of his works.

It was at Chester, likewise, that he improved a slight acquaintance which he had formed at Edinburgh with his fellow-student, John Haygarth, M. D. into one of the most sincere, cordial, and valuable friendships which cheered and supported him through his earthly pilgrimage;—a friendship tried by long years of continued absence,—by much diversity of tastes, pursuits, and connections,—and, above all, by a marked opposition both of political and religious sentiments, when party contests ran the highest; which, nevertheless, through all the mutations of half a century, stood without even a suspicion of insecurity, and yielded at length only to the inevitable stroke which levels all.

The distance between Chester and Warrington, about twenty miles, was unfavourable to the cultivation of intimacy between the medical friends, but they overcame the difficulty in great measure by appointments at the intermediate village of Frodsham, where they often enjoyed a social meal, and the delights of a few hours of the unreserved communication of sentiments, opinions, plans and projects. A correspondence was also maintained between them ever after, from which many extracts will appear in the progress of this memoir, the letters having been communicated for the purpose by their venerable and amiable possessor.

The first of these epistolary series thus describes the feelings of Mr. Aikin on his change of residence: "It was with a heavy heart that I took my farewel of Chester. On my journey homewards I turned to take a last view of it, and could not help an involuntary invocation of blessing upon it; I then in a melancholy mood jogged slowly home. Chester has been a coy but very agreeable mistress, whom I should probably have courted with success, but that her favours were already engaged. Her reserve began to give way, and I could have been happy as a friend though not as a lover; but being determined to take a partner for life, I was obliged to offer to a more homely but more attainable nymph. To drop metaphors, I shall ever think with pleasure on my short abode at Chester, and shall ever regard many persons there with affection and esteem. To these emotions gratitude will be added when I think of my very agreeable connection with Dr. Haygarth; and the acquisition of such a friend would alone be a compensation for the time spent there."

In the same letter he refers to the manuscript of a professional work by Mr. White, which that gentleman had submitted to the unsparing criticism of himself and his friend; he also mentions a pamphlet of his own, entitled, Thoughts on Hospitals, which was soon after published, and well received both by medical and general readers.

Almost at the same time, early in 1772, he first ventured to solicit the notice of the public in a character which he never acknowledged as incompatible with his professional one—that of a polite writer and cultivator of elegant literature. His trial-piece was a small volume, entitled *Essays on Song Writing: with a collection of such English Songs as are most eminent for poetical merit.* These essays were four in number; one on Song-writing in general; the other three on the respective classes under which the collection was distributed; Pastoral Songs and Ballads; Passionate and Descriptive; and Witty and Ingenious Songs: they are written with a perspicuity and correctness worthy of the most practised pen, and exhibit that union of sound sense with native taste and feeling, heightened by classical refinement, which is the general character of his critical works. The selection of songs exhibited some of the brightest gems of English poetry, carefully separated from all baser substances. A second edition of this agreeable volume was quickly demanded; and very many years afterwards, the editor was prevailed upon to re-model his youthful design, with considerable additions to the collection, under the title of *Vocal Poetry.** It was one of the most pleasing circumstances attending this work, that it suggested to the imagination of his sister her beautiful poem entitled, The origin of Song-writing.†

A few months afterwards, Mr. Aikin's prospects in life appeared such as to enable him, without more than a due share of the sanguine spirit of youth, to venture upon the completion of the dearest wish of his heart, and he was accordingly united to her who had long bestowed upon him her warmest affections. Towards the conclusion of the same happy year, devoted to love and poetry, he had the high gratification of aiding his sister in selecting, revising, and conducting through the press, her volume of poems, which the urgency of his entreaties had chiefly prevailed upon her to give to the world;—their success proved equal to their merit; and while it justified the judgment of her brother from the imputation of partiality, it swelled his heart with the purest emotions of delight and triumph.

In the following year, this truly fraternal pair appeared as the joint authors of a small volume of *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose;* the first edition of which, printed at Warrington, was soon exhausted, and succeeded by a London one, published by Johnson. The share of Mr. Aikin in this collection was considerably the smallest and least important; the essay on the heroic poem of Gondibert, however, is an elegant piece of criticism, and the fragment of Sir Bertram exhibited inventive powers which he had not before displayed: As "Tales of Terror" were at this time a novelty, it produced a considerable effect, and has been many times re-published by the compilers of selections.

The marriage of Miss Aikin, in the summer of 1774, to the Rev. Mr. Barbauld, and her consequent removal to Palgrave, in

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* One vol. 12mo. Johnson, 1810.

† See Mrs. Barbauld's Poems.

Suffolk, where a life of active occupation awaited her, necessarily dissolved that kind of literary partnership which subsisted between the brother and sister, and to which not only congeniality of tastes and pursuits, but the habit of daily intercourse, was essential. The pain of separation was severely felt by both: but the resource of frequent and intimate correspondence, animated by occasional meetings, remained; and Warrington still afforded to Mr. Aikin, beyond the bounds of his own family, one dear and congenial friend with whom to "take sweet counsel" in all that interested him, whether as a man or an author. This friend was the Rev. William Enfield, L. L. D. at this time a dissenting minister at Warrington, and one of the tutors at the academy; a man esteemed by the public for several useful and acceptable works, and beloved by all who ever knew him. In the Rev. George Walker, also, who had succeeded to the office of mathematical tutor at the academy, Mr. Aikin rejoiced to discover a man of strong native genius, interesting in conversation by an uncommon flow of fervid eloquence, proceeding from one of the purest and warmest of human hearts.

Literary occupation had now become to Mr. Aikin one of the habits, and almost the wants, of daily life; and no plan of original composition at this time suggesting itself, he undertook the translation of *Tacitus's Life of Agricola,* which was printed at Warrington in a remarkably correct and elegant manner, together with the original Latin. For a task like this, his exact knowledge of the Latin language, and his concise and energetic style, were equally well adapted; and the success of this first essay induced him some time afterwards to add a translation of the interesting tract *On the Manners of the Germans,* by the same author, accompanied by an extensive selection from the learned notes of Brotier. The two pieces, carefully revised, were many years afterwards re-printed in a single volume, which has passed into the fourth edition; and it has been much regretted by competent judges, that the announcement of a translation of the entire works of this philosophical historian by Mr. Murphy, induced Mr. Aikin to lay aside a similar design which he had formed, and in which he had made considerable progress.

A fresh proof of his industry and spirit of literary enterprise, directed in this instance to the advancement and diffusion of professional knowledge, was soon after afforded by the appearance of his *Specimen of the Medical Biography of Great Britain,* *with an address to the public.* This was a great and important undertaking, comprising a history of the progress of medical science in this island, with biographies of the most distinguished practitioners of the healing art, and copious analyses of their writings, with critical observations. The labour and difficulty of the work were much enhanced to Mr. Aikin, by his provincial residence, remote from all assistance of libraries, public or private, and by the ties of a profession which forbade him to travel in search of documents, the perusal of which could not otherwise be procured. His specimen, however, attracted attention, and he received from several quarters useful suggestions and offers of assistance. The late excellent Dr. Fothergill having, in his summer residences at his seat in Cheshire, become acquainted with Mr. Aikin,—who always retained the highest admiration of his skill as a physician, and the sincerest esteem for his personal worth,—offered him books and useful hints, and expressed warm interest in the progress of the work. Mr. Pegge forwarded to him, with some rare black letter tracts, remarks highly characteristic of his own antiquarian tastes; and he entered into some correspondence on the subject with Dr. Ducarel. The late Mr. Falconer, of Chester, communicated some learned remarks. Loans of scarce volumes were procured from the libraries of some colleges at Cambridge, and valuable assistance of various kinds was contributed by Dr. Haygarth. Thus encouraged, he devoted much time and pains to this pursuit: but the difficulties attending the investigation of the earlier and darker periods of medical history were found in the end insuperable; and when, five years afterwards, he published in a single octavo volume, *Biographical Memoirs of Medicine in Great Britain, from the revival of literature to the time of Hervey,* he was obliged to explain the causes of this limitation of his plan. Situated as he was, he found that printed books were the only documents to which he was able to gain access; this deficiency, however, affected only those portions of his subject which might be regarded as offering least either of amusement or instruction, and he still flattered himself that he should find sufficient encouragement to carry down his design through periods of increasing light and knowledge. But his plan was met on the part of the faculty, by an apathy for which he was not prepared; the topic, notwithstanding an elegant and a popular mode of treating it, as far as the biographical part was concerned, was repulsive to general readers; and after repeatedly resuming, and again laying aside this favourite task during nearly twenty succeeding years, he was compelled finally to abandon it, as one which promised no adequate remuneration either in fame or emolument. The completed volume, however, has been much prized by a select few, and the idea of continuing the work has several times been entertained by persons not sufficiently informed, perhaps, of the accumulated obstacles which overcame the resolution of the original projector.

The following account of his various pursuits, occurs in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Barbauld written in the summer of 1775:—"Many a vain wish have I formed since your last visit, that the pleasures we derived from your company might have been more durable. This desire has more particularly recurred during the solitary state of our academical secession, in which our social circle has been for the most part contracted within the narrow bounds of our two families. However, with business, books, a wife and children, I should be unreasonable to complain of *ennui*; and I have taken the most effectual method to keep it off by being pretty fully employed in my *grand scheme,* which goes on briskly and prosperously. Dr. Fothergill, who has been down here, approves it and offers me his assistance; and my more intimate friends of the faculty all encourage me to go on with spirit.

"I have lately been writing the life of a very extraordinary man, Sir Thomas Browne, the famous Norwich physician, and author of *Religio Medici.* Did you ever read this singular book? If not, I desire you and my sister would immediately do it and give me your opinions concerning it. It has all the spirit and eccentricity of uncommon genius."

In September, 1776, he thus records the progress of his plans: —"I have a terrible heap of old books to look over, and need not want a fresh supply when they are done with; for Dr. Darwin of Litchfield has sent me word that if I will send an ass with a pair of panniers, he will load him with old books of physic, bought at two-pence a pound.

"I have just finished for our composition club, a paper of Remarks on Inconsistencies in some of Shakespeare's characters. What heresy! you will say. It is a sort of bold stroke, I must confess; but I was provoked past endurance at finding some of the Scotch writers, Richardson in particular, quoting Shakespeare for any fact in the history of the human mind like gospel; and philosophising away upon any sentiment of this poor player's as if he had all the schools of all the philosophers, ancient and modern, in his head. Shakespeare is a poet,—let him not be degraded into a mere moralist. I can lose myself in ecstasy in his Enchanted island or forest of Arden, but I cannot allow his Richard to be a true Macchiavel, or his Hamlet a model of virtuous feeling."

The life of Agricola had been designed by Mr. Aikin partly as a proof of his own skill as a translator, partly as a specimen of "a Warrington-printed classic," and the accuracy with which it had been executed by Mr. Eyres, encouraged him to try another experiment of the same kind. It was his fondness for natural history which on this occasion directed his choice of an author, and produced the plan thus unfolded in a letter to Mr. Barbauld.

"Did you ever read Pliny's Natural History? I have a scheme, as indeed I am never without one, of selecting some of the more entertaining and unexceptionable parts of his account of animals, of which there is a good deal very elegant and pleasing, and making a school-book out of them. My father and several friends approve of it, if it can be made worth while. But Pliny is a difficult author, and many schoolmasters would not perhaps trust themselves with him. If this objection were obviated, to be sure the subject of the book, teaching things as well as words, and things more accommodated to the taste and capacity of boys than the general subjects of school-books, would make the publication very desirable. Pray give me your free opinion upon the matter."

The selection appeared soon after in a thin duodecimo; and Mr. Aikin thought himself fortunate in prevailing upon his learned father to contribute a short Latin preface, composed with such fullness of meaning and such an elegant purity of language, as to have called forth extraordinary commendations from a living scholar of first rate eminence. A selection of entire pieces from Seneca, and a complete edition of the works of Statius, were afterwards printed for the use of schools by Eyres under Mr. Aikin's superintendence.

An Essay on the application of Natural History to Poetry, printed in 1777, was Mr. Aikin's next contribution to the amusement and instruction of the public;—to please and to profit together was indeed the general aim of his writings, and the mode by which he effected this double purpose is well exemplified in the instance before us.

The sciences which he chiefly pursued,—those founded on experiment and the investigation of nature,—unlike the mathematics and the more abstruse questions of metaphysics, easily lend themselves to an alliance with polite literature; they supply rhetoric with metaphors and illustrations, and poetry with simile and description, and derive lustre in return from a moderate and judicious employment of the ornaments of cultivated diction. This he early perceived; and nothing is more observable in a large portion of his works than the blending of various branches of natural knowledge with the elegancies of literature; while the spirit of philosophical criticism presiding over the whole, deduces its principles and suggests it reflections, now from the discoveries of science, and now from the creations of genius.

The Essay is dedicated to Mr. Pennant, from whose works its original idea and some of its most valuable materials are stated to be derived. It begins with taking notice of the frequent complaint of the general insipidity of modern poetry; and rejecting the discouraging theory of a general decay of genius, finds the solution of the fact in that prevalent imitation of preceding poets which takes place, among their successors, of original observation, and the exercise of invention. Novelty of subject, he pronounces to be the present requisite, and he recommends that it should be sought among "the grand and beautiful objects which nature every where profusely throws around us; and which, though the most obvious store of new materials to the poet, is that which of all others he has most sparingly touched." In illustration of the habit of successive copying which has long prevailed, he adduces several instances, from writers of high name; but speedily quitting this more beaten ground, he proceeds to offer examples of another fault, the vagueness and indistinctness, and sometimes the inconsistency and absurdity, which the neglect of the study of actual nature has introduced into poetical description. A discussion follows of the "false representations of nature which ancient error or fable first introduced, but which, having been made the foundation of ingenious figures and pleasing allusions, the poets of every age have adopted." These, not without some graceful expressions of reluctance and regret, are at length condemned; on the principle, that "nothing can be really beautiful which has not truth for its basis," and on the further considerations of "the boundless variety of genuine beauties, applicable to every purpose of ornament which nature liberally scatters around us," and of "the danger of suffering falsehood and error habitually to intrude even in matters of the slightest importance." It is also well observed, that "a modern writer can lose nothing by this rigour; for since both true and false wit have been so long employed upon these topics, every thing brilliant or ingenious which they can suggest, must long since have been exhausted; and the revival of them at present is as much a proof of barren invention as of false taste."

After a few more observations on the *defects* usually discoverable in poetical compositions, which the accurate and scientific study of nature might obviate, the essayist proceeds to the more pleasing task of pointing out the *beauties* which the poet may derive from this source. He observes, that "all parts of nature do not seem equally capable of affording poetical imagery. The vegetable creation, delightful as it is to the senses, and extensive in utility, yields comparatively few materials to the poet, whose art is principally defective in representing those qualities in which *it* chiefly excels; colour, scent, and taste. The mineral kingdom is still more sterile and unaccommodated to description. The animal race, who, in common with their human lord and head, have almost universally, somewhat of moral and intellectual character; whose motions, habitations, and pursuits, are so infinitely and curiously varied; and whose connection with man arises to a sort of companionship and mutual attachment; seem on these accounts peculiarly adapted to the purposes of poetry. Separately considered, they afford matter for pleasing and even sublime speculation; in the rural landscape they give animation to the objects around them; and viewed in comparison with human kind they suggest amusive and instructive lessons." Accordingly it is from zoology that the subjects of the remaining part of the essay are almost exclusively derived.

Two sets of examples, connected by critical and didactic observations, are here produced,—passages in various poets describing objects of natural history,—and passages in the works of naturalists and travellers capable of affording fresh topics for poetical employment. Of these it need only be here remarked, that Homer and Virgil among the ancients, and Milton, and above all Thomson, among the moderns, are the chief sources of the first class, while a pretty considerable range of writers, with Pliny and Pennant at their head, furnish contributions to the second. The Essay as a whole is elegant and pleasing in design, and the novelty of the topic recommended it to many readers; in execution it might doubtless have been improved by the employment of more time and research in the consultation of different authors; and it is principally on account of its connection with the state of poetry and of the study of natural history at the period of its production, that this early effort deserves particular notice in the biography of its author.

The recent deaths of Goldsmith, Collins, and Gray, had nearly reduced the English muses to silence, and the pause gave full leisure to suggest new experiments, whether in the topics or in the structure of verse. The "tune" of Pope had palled upon the public ear, and of a succession of lyric poets there could be little hope, considering the extreme difficulty of this style; Thomson alone, of all the recent models, appeared likely to reward the particular study of the rising generation of poets; for, as his chief merit lay in the vigour and freshness of his painting, no one could hope to emulate his fame without studying directly from nature. But probably this very necessity, combined with a certain uncouthness in the manner of this great writer, had discouraged in a considerable degree the efforts of imitators, and no school of descriptive poets had yet been formed. But many causes were secretly conspiring to excite that passion for natural scenery, and all the objects connected with rural life, by which Englishmen are now distinguished above the members of any other civilised community; and those who first began to cultivate an intimacy with the works of nature, soon enjoyed the satisfaction of witnessing the extensive success of their efforts for the diffusion and advancement of their favourite studies. Mr. Aikin, among others, proved a prosperous missionary in the cause; and though I would by no means affirm, that it was at his suggestion, in the essay before us, that succeeding poets began to tread in the path there indicated, it was at least a striking confirmation of the justness of his taste and judgment, to find them seeking and attaining novelty, beauty, and grandeur by following that very course. Two men of extraordinary genius, Cowper and Darwin, arose within a few years, who, with the utmost diversity in all other points, agreed however in drawing largely from the well-heads of natural history; and the anxious researches of a latter school of poets seem now to have left few of its springs untasted.

Few things could have been more welcome to Mr. Aikin, while his mind was yet warm with the ideas which had produced his last piece, than the request which he received from a London bookseller, to compose an essay on Thomson's *Seasons*, to be prefixed to an ornamented edition of the work. He flew to his task with that alacrity of spirit which is the best omen of success; and certainly not one of his critical pieces better fulfils the true purposes of these prefatory essays,—those of unfolding, in a luminous and elegant style, the plan and scope of the author,—pointing out his characteristic excellencies with just discrimination, and heightening the relish of his beauties by supplying the various accessary ideas, which suggest themselves spontaneously to the mind of the accomplished scholar alone; but which, when offered to them in a clear and popular manner, are capable of greatly enhancing the enjoyment even of common readers.

It would be superfluous to enter into further particulars respecting a piece which is included in the present volumes; but one observation seems to be required. Had Cowper's *Task* been then given to the public, a comparison of this writer and Thomson, as descriptive poets, would in all probability have formed a part of the essay on the *Seasons*. It so happens, that this very subject was many years afterwards taken up by the author, in a paper communicated to a periodical work; and that paper will here be found appended to the essay.

At the period of which we are speaking, the system of Linnæus was making rapid progress in this country; his arrangement of plants, in particular, was attentively studied and generally adopted: fresh activity was thus communicated to the pursuit of botany, which, since the death of the excellent Ray, had remained in a rather neglected condition, and several works of merit in this branch of natural history were produced. Hudson's *Flora Anglica* was first printed in 1762, and again, with great additions, in 1778; Lightfoot's *Flora Scotica* was given to the public through the generous exertions of Mr. Pennant in 1777, and Dr. Withering's *Botanical Description of British Plants* made its appearance in 1776. By some one of these publications, but most probably from the last mentioned, Mr. Aikin was inspired with a taste for this delightful study, which his previous love and knowledge of the works of nature in other departments peculiarly fitted him to imbibe. Its effects upon his mind are thus warmly celebrated by his own pen, in one of his letters to his son.... "The study of English botany caused several summers to glide away with me in more pure and active delight than almost any other single object ever afforded me. It rendered every walk and ride interesting, and converted the plodding rounds of business into excursions of pleasure." To which it may be added, that as he communicated a greater or less share of this taste to most of his own family, and to several of his friends, it became an additional source of social sympathy and domestic enjoyment. Independently of what he has written professedly on botanical subjects, his works are often enriched by illustrations, remarks and allusions which prove his intimate acquaintance with this branch of knowledge; and among his private papers, some interesting records exist of the characteristic manner in which he pursued it. In a calendar, beginning in the spring of 1778, and regularly carried on for six years, the names and *habitats* of all the plants which he observed are noted, with the respective periods of flowering, in the different years, of many common species, both wild and cultivated; notices of the progress of vegetation, which he seems afterwards to have employed in his little work for young people, entitled *The Calendar of Nature.* An elegant fragment of a poem in blank verse, called *The Botanic Walk,* indicates his constant endeavour to associate poetry, like a beloved mistress, with all his favourite studies; a propensity which is further attested by a very pleasing collection of passages, selected from the Latin poets, relating to forest-trees, accompanied by remarks, tending to show the superior merit and accuracy of these writers, as observers and describers of natural objects.*

It also appears, that he did not acquiesce without a struggle in the adoption of the *artificial* system of arrangement laid down by Linnæus. The *natural* methods of some preceding botanists possessed much superior attractions for one who was more inclined to take a large view of the vegetable economy as a whole, itself making a portion of a greater whole, than to descend to the minute details of classes and genera; and he carefully examined and analysed for his own use the classifications of Haller and Jessieu. But further experience of the great convenience of the Linnæan system to the practical botanist reconciled him to its use, without however blinding him to its defects, and his mature judgment upon it appears in the Letter to his son on *Classification in Natural History.* The following remarks, however, which he never made public, seem to possess some interest as a specimen of the manner in which his understanding exercised itself on the principles of the Swedish naturalist.

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* This collection he afterwards formed into a set of papers which appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine in the years 1786 and 1787, and will be found in the Appendix. (A)

"Linnæus, in his *Philosophia Botanica*, lays down the following proposition: 'The *essence* of VEGETABLES consists in the FRUCTIFICATION; the *essence* of the FRUCTIFICATION, in the FLOWER and FRUIT; the *essence* of the FLOWER in the ANTHERA and STIGMA; the *essence* of the FRUIT in the SEED.'

"In the beginning of the same chapter, he defines the *fructification* to be a *temporary* part of vegetables, appropriated to generation. But how can what is *temporary* be *essential.*

"If by the *essence* of a thing be meant that which causes it to be recognised for what it is, (and we cannot, perhaps, arrive at a clearer idea of essence,) a number of parts or qualities must be taken into consideration, each of which is as essential as another; and *essence* will consist in their permanent and constant union in the same subject. Thus, for a tree to be known as an *oak*, it is as essential that it should have a particular kind of bark, manner of growth, grain of wood, shape of leaf, &c. as that it should bear acorns. Nay, the latter is in common estimation the least essential of all; since it takes place during a small portion of the year, and in many individuals does not happen at all. Linnæus himself, too, in his characters of *species* (which alone are real existences) is obliged to take in other circumstances to those of the fructification, in order to mark them out. Thus, the *Quercus Robur* (Common Oak) is not only a plant with such and such parts of fructification, according to the generical description, but with *leaves* sinuated in a particular manner; otherwise, according to his system, it might be a holm-oak or a cork-tree. But a woodman will distinguish it even without leaves, by its bark and wood.

"The proposition of Linnæus is only then to be understood with regard to his own system; and not without some latitude, even of that."

The social temper of Mr. Aikin rendered him eager to communicate to others a fondness for those pursuits from which he derived his own amusement and instruction. That very eminent botanist, Mr. Markham Salisbury, then a student at Warrington academy, was primarily indebted to him for his love of the science. A very distinguished lover of nature, no less than of art and literature, Mr. Roscoe, caught from him the same taste; and the following extract from a letter to Dr. Haygarth, written after a little excursion which they had made together in Wales, proves the zeal of his friend to enlist him also in the cause:

"The remembrance of our delightful ramble has been a store of pleasure to me ever since, unalloyed by any bad consequences from it, either with respect to business or health. I never was so little fatigued with a long ride. Most of my mountaineers survive their change of climate. Greatly do I wish that you were not only almost but altogether a botanist. We could negotiate the cleverest exchanges of plants and observations, and plan the most charming summer meetings! I will be bound to furnish your *rock* completely at once, and then let them call it a stone heap that dare. I will venture to try a botanical commission or two upon you, chiefly to oblige you to turn your attention that way.

"When you ride next over the hill above Broughton, be so good as to 'light and search for a little *Campanula*, a very small plant with a blue flower, either the *Campanula uniflora* or *hederifolia*, which I found growing plentifully there. And when you are at Ruthin, visit the castle, where, among several other uncommon plants, you will find plentifully growing out of the walls an odd-smelling aromatic plant, of the mint or basil kind, with little red flowers in whirls, which I want much, especially as I don't know what it is. The seeds will do as well or better than the roots of both these."

It is now time to advert to the other objects which about this time exercised the activity of a mind which proved its vigour by its versatility. In a letter to Mrs. Barbauld, dated in February 1777, is the following passage:—"We have a work now in Eyres's press which will I think establish the reputation of its author as the *best man*, if not the most elegant writer in England. It is the benevolent Mr. Howard's account of Prisons, a subject which he has for some years pursued with a spirit and assiduity that looks scarcely of a piece with any thing else to be met with in this degenerate age. Nothing but his book can give a proper idea of the dangers and fatigues he has gone through in his truly patriotic design. He has been here superintending the printing, for three or four weeks, and will stay as much longer. I have the pleasure of seeing him every day, being his corrector and revisor and so forth. It will be a large quarto, not ill written, and though containing a good deal of dry matter, yet on the whole very interesting, if not entertaining."

Thus then was commenced an intercourse which Mr. Aikin always accounted among the most interesting and honourable circumstances of his life, as it led to his long and confidential intimacy with that truly great man, the philanthropic Howard, whom he loved and honoured during his life, and whose memory he celebrated and protected after his death. Further notices of this excellent person will occur in the course of this narrative; at present we proceed with the literary journal of the immediate subject of this memoir. Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld having no child of their own, had prevailed upon Mr. and Mrs. Aikin to make over to them one of theirs as an adopted son; for this favoured child Mrs. Barbauld composed her well known "Early Lessons;" when completed, they were committed to her brother to be conducted through the press; his judgment upon their merits, long since confirmed by the public, is thus expressed:—"The little book you have sent for Charles is what a person of real genius alone could have written; and so far from degrading Mr. Eyres's press, I sincerely believe it has never been employed about so really useful a work, all its metaphysics, divinity, philosophy, and even poetry not excepted." "I never," he adds, "knew my time more fully taken up than at present, so various are my occupations of reading, writing, lecturing, curing, &c. &c. Thomson has not yet got into the press, nor have I near finished my essay. It is a most laborious piece of composition; vastly more than I expected. I shall not set about it in good earnest till I am reminded by the little black gentleman of the press with the usual cry of 'Sir, we want copy.'"

"You once asked me, in relation to my extracts from Pliny, 'If these are your true stories, where are your lies?' This I mean to show you, being now engaged in a fair translation of the zoological books of his Natural History, to which Mr. Pennant is to contribute notes. What think you of the venom of the basilisk being so potent, that when one of them is killed by a man on horseback, the poison ascends through the spear, and kills not only the man but his horse too? To tell the truth, I am almost ashamed to set my name to some of his old wives' tales. But 'tis Latin, so it may pass."

This translation, however, was not completed; in a following letter, he thus refers to it:—"A pretty scheme enough in idea, but on actually going strait forwards with my author, I am almost disgusted by his errors and old woman's fables. Surely the world is full enough of falsehood and nonsense without adding such stuff to the mass. Moreover, I find on examination that Pliny has copied almost all his truths from Aristotle, and was no observer himself. So I believe if I can get off handsomely I shall drop the scheme, though I have done something considerable in it."

The "lecturing" mentioned in the list of his engagements was the delivery of a course of chemistry to the students of the Warrington academy. The subject at this period occupied much of his attention; he made many experiments, in conjunction with one of the elder students, whom he had inspired with equal or superior ardour in the same pursuit; and he undertook a translation of Baumé's *Manuel de Chymie*, published in 1778. Four years afterwards, he printed *Heads of Chemistry* for the use of his class. For the use of another class, to whom he then gave lectures in anatomy, he likewise printed *A Sketch of the Animal Economy*, and afterwards a Latin translation of it with additions.

Educated in that strong attachment to the House of Hanover which was peculiarly characteristic of the Protestant dissenters during the reigns of the two first Georges, Mr. Aikin had continued up to this period of his life, an ardent rather than discriminating lover of his country and admirer of the British Constitution; a patriot of that class who, while participating with the warmest filial interest in all the fortunes of their country, find themselves little disposed to exercise a critical judgment upon the wisdom or rectitude of those counsels by which her affairs are conducted. The glories of the war commenced in 1756 had warmed his imagination as a child; and it seems never to have occurred to him to ask himself whether, amid so much to flatter national vanity, any tendencies might be discerned, in the policy pursued by the Government, dangerous to public liberty and the common good. In the beginning of that memorable contest which terminated in the independence of the North American colonies, the ingratitude and undutifulness of these metaphorical children towards a parent who had nourished and protected them in infancy, had strongly affected his feelings, in common with those of the great mass of the English people, and during the first years of war, no one was a more firm upholder of the justice of that measure. But the further progress of events, and the free discussions of fundamental principles which it called forth, produced a gradual but complete and permanent revolution in his opinions on these subjects. The change is dated by a letter to his sister as having taken place in the year 1778.

From this period he became a strenuous supporter of the cause of civil liberty, in whatever quarter of the world her banner was displayed; to that cause he often devoted the service of his pen, and sacrificed in many important circumstances his worldly interests; it was an attachment, in fact, which might truly be said to have given its colour to the whole of his remaining life, and it is therefore important to have marked exactly the time and manner of its commencement.*

Of his literary occupations in the year 1779, he gives the following details:—"I have got some of the books I wanted for the Medical Biography, and so am pushing on to the end of the first volume, which will come out this winter. Another piece of business just coming upon me is the revisal of Mr. Howard's Appendix to his Book on Prisons,—the fruit of another very extensive foreign tour which this good, this glorious man has taken in pursuit of his very humane and important object. He is just now arrived here, and will be in Warrington during the whole printing of his work, which, as there is to be a second edition of the whole too, will be several weeks. You will perhaps have seen in the papers his appointment to the office of one of the supervisors of the Penitentiary Houses for Criminals to be erected by act of parliament. This is a very happy appointment for the public: for himself, he has refused any salary or gratuity for his trouble, as likewise have his two colleagues".

His close connection with the Warrington academy at this period, rendered its affairs highly interesting to him; and in the summer of 1779 an addition was made to the number of tutors, which proved one of its most valuable accessions. The Rev. Dr.

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* See a Letter on the Attachment to Country in Dr. Aikin's Letters to his Son, vol. i.

Aikin,—that title he had lately acquired by diploma from the Scotch University at which he had studied,—had sustained for several years the double office of tutor in divinity and in classics; —but increasing infirmities now compelled him to discontinue his lectures in the latter branch, and the trustees of the institution were reluctantly compelled to seek for a successor. The place of Dr. Aikin could not, it was found, be adequately supplied in the class of dissenting ministers, who were usually much better versed in studies strictly professional than in the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. In this dilemma it fortunately occurred to Dr. Priestley, as Mr. Aikin writes to his sister, "to make inquiries in a new tract,—among the clergy who were dissatisfied with the Church, and would not disdain an alliance with dissenters. Dr. Jebb strongly recommended a Mr. Wakefield, now officiating at Liverpool as a curate; and on further inquiry he had the amplest testimonials for extensive learning, candour, and morals. On mentioning the thing to him, he seemed pleased with the proposal, and the trustees on their part unanimously concurred in wishing him to come." "We like him much," adds Mr. Aikin, "on sight and conversation, and there is every reason at present to hope that he will prove a valuable acquisition to the academy and to our circle. My father has conceived a very high opinion of him." Thus auspiciously commenced the connection of that virtuous man and accomplished scholar, the late Gilbert Wakefield, with Warrington and with a family since bound to his by closer and by dearer ties.

The sentiments of reciprocal esteem and affection excited in the bosom of Mr. Wakefield towards his new associates, will best be collected from the following passage of his interesting and ingenuous Memoirs of his own life. "I reflect to this day with a pensive pleasure saddened by regret on the delightful converse,

'That feast of reason and that flow of soul,'

which I enjoyed with my colleagues; especially at a weekly meeting holden alternately at the house of each other, and rendered still more agreeable by the occasional accession of some congenial spirit, resident on the spot, or casually introduced as a visitor:

Tecum etenim longos memini consumere soles—
While summer suns roll unperceived away."

He adds, "We once made an attempt to form another society at Warrington merely literary, consisting of Dr. Enfield, the present Dr. Aikin, and myself, and an assortment of the superior students: at which every member was to produce in his turn some composition in prose or verse, upon a subject of criticism, philosophy, or taste. I never relished this sort of meeting, in which set speeches were expected; but was happy enough when conversation glided, by a natural and unprepared course, into a literary channel. We soon gave it up."

Not long was this delightful society permitted to remain entire. The constitutional maladies of the Rev. Dr. Aikin continued to gain ground upon his feeble frame; and scrupulously apprehensive of retaining the office of instruction under any diminution of the powers of active exertion, he, in the summer of the year 1780, gave in his resignation of the tutorship in divinity, which he had hitherto retained. The Rev. Dr. Clayton, of Liverpool, was appointed to succeed him; but not being prepared immediately to commence his course, Dr. Aikin had agreed to go on to the end of the academical sessions. But this undertaking it was not permitted to him to complete;—an acute attack of a single day and night was sufficient to exhaust his small remains of strength, and terminated his career on December 14, 1780. The feelings of one of the most dutiful and affectionate of sons on this trying occasion, may best be collected from his own expressions on announcing the sad and sudden event to his beloved sister.

"That one of the best men in the world has been thus easily removed from a state of pain and infirmity, his usefulness and even his enjoyments not failing till the last day of his life, his breast serene, his prospects bright—can certainly, on his own account, be in no respect a subject of grieving. But we—my dear sister—what have not we lost! The best parent, the wisest counsellor, the most affectionate friend, every thing that could command love and veneration, united in him we possessed,—and him we have lost. Our consolation must be in a grateful sense of the blessings we have left, which are numerous enough to demand our warm and cheerful acknowledgments."

In a second letter, giving an account of the funeral, these reflections are added. "Thus the painful scenes have been gone through by us; and I trust will soon leave little more than a tender regret for our loss, rendered not unpleasing by the reflection of the hopes to which our deceased parent succeeds, together with the universal esteem and affection he has left imprinted on the minds of all who knew him."

The following short, but expressive tribute to the character of this revered parent also accurs in Dr. Aikin's Letters from a Father to his Son:—"From every thing I have seen of the world, I am convinced that more is to be done towards obtaining happiness in general, and its precious ingredient, freedom of action, in particular, by contracting the bounds of our wishes, than by the utmost extension of our powers in filling a plan of unlimited enjoyment. This, I believe, is not fashionable doctrine, but it is that which the experience of my own heart suggests. It would too, I am sure, have been supported by the suffrage of your grand father, whose memory I know you so justly revere. Though by no means what would be called a high spirited man, he preserved during life an honourable independence, by the simple method of making nothing essential to his happiness which did not come within the reach of his useful and low priced services. I wish you better health, stronger spirits, and perhaps more encouragement from the world than he had;—more knowledge, superior talents, higher worth, and a more truly philosophical temper, I need not wish you, though paternal affection is little inclined to be a niggard in its wishes."*

A more elaborate, and I believe a very resembling portrait of this admirable person is found in Mr. Wakefield's Memoirs, where he describes the characters of his Warrington colleagues; and the insertion of it in this work will not be regarded as a digression by the reader who duly estimates the weight of parental instructions and example in the formation of character.

"Our Divinity tutor, Dr. Aikin, was a gentleman whose endowments as a man and as a scholar, according to my sincere judgment of him, it is not easy to exaggerate by panegyric. In his life he was rigorously virtuous, and when I knew him, under as perfect a self government, as a participation of human weaknesses can well allow. He has acknowledged to me his irascible propensities in early life, and the difficulties which he had encountered in the dicipline of his temper. *Religion* had brought every wayward idea and irregular passion into subjection to the laws of reason, and had erected her trophy in the citadel of his

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* Letter on Independence.

mind. The high esteem and even veneration in which I held him, received some abatement, I must candidly acknowledge, several years after his decease, on hearing from a friend at Nottingham, of unquestionable veracity, who had formerly been his scholar at Kibworth in Leicestershire, some mortifying instances of severity in the castigation of his pupils. And should a historian, faithful to his trust, suppress the relation of this blemish, compensated by such various and exalted excellencies?

> velut si
> Egregio inspersos reprêndas corpore nævos.*

"As his whole conduct was strictly moral, so the influences of religion upon his mind were permanent and awful. He was benevolent and candid in all his judgments upon the character of others: of great hospitality, as I myself experienced: quick to discern, and ready to acknowledge, true merit wherever it resided: not tenacious of his own opinions, but patiently attentive, beyond almost any man I ever knew, to the reasonings of an opponent: perfectly open to conviction: of an affability, softened by a modest opinion of himself, that endeared him to all: and a politeness of demeanour seldom found even in an elevated station. His intellectual attainments were of a very superior quality indeed. His acquaintance with all the *evidences* of revelation, with *morals, politics, and metaphysics,* was most accurate and extensive. Every path of polite literature had been traversed by him, and traversed with success. He understood the Hebrew and French languages to perfection; and had an intimacy with the best authors of Greece and Rome, superior to what I have ever known in any dissenting minister from my own experience. His taste for composition was correct and elegant: and his repetition of beautiful passages, though accompanied with a theatrical stateliness and pomp, highly animated and expressive of sensibility."

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* Let me be permitted, however, in opposition to the report of the "Nottingham friend," whom my father said he well remembered as the most unpromising and disobedient boy in the whole school,—to relate the following incident, which I never recal without deep emotion:—About eleven years ago, being on a visit at the house of a particular friend at York, I met with a gentleman who, on learning of what family I was, begged to introduce himself to me as Mr. John Coltman of Leicester, and thus addressed me: "My father was a scholar of your grand father at Kibworth; and acquired from him that love of reading which was ever after his delight and solace. To the end of his life, and I had only last year the misfortune of losing him, he never named your grand father but with eyes swimming in tears."

After the publication of his volume of Medical Biography in 1780, Mr. Aikin laid aside this work, and no other of any considerable magnitude occupied his attention for some years. In fact, his necessary engagements were now too numerous to admit of his devoting a very considerable portion of his time to literary composition. His practice, especially in the most fatiguing branch of his profession, was extensive, and he had undertaken the charge of two medical pupils. One of these was a son of Mr. White of Manchester, who remained with him only a few months, being designed for a physician; the other was Mr. P. Holland, now a surgeon of eminence, settled at Knutsford in Cheshire. This gentleman remained with him two years; and never, it may safely be affirmed, was a similar connexion productive of a higher degree of mutual satisfaction. Treated in all respects like a member of the family, the pupil learned to feel as one; and neither absence nor length of time, ever obliterated, or impaired, either his sense of grateful attachment to the friend and instructor of his youth, or the affection and esteem of that friend for one so highly deserving of both these sentiments.

Among the lighter studies which amused this period of vacation from the cares of authorship was the composition of some small pieces of verse, one of which, *Horatian Philosophy*, he mentions, on sending it to his sister, as extracted from various passages of that favourite writer. As a happy specimen both of his powers in familiar verse, and of the strain of sentiment in the ancient poet which he found peculiarly accordant with his own disposition, the lines may here find a place:

HORATIAN PHILOSOPHY.

"From scenes of tumult, noise and strife,
And all the ills of public life,
From waiting at the great man's gate,
Amid the slaves that swell his state;
From coxcomb poets and their verses;
From streets with chariots throng'd, and hearses;
From rattling spendthrifts and their guests,
And dull buffoons with scurvy jests;
From fashion's whims and folly's freaks;
From shouts by day and nightly shrieks;
O let me make a quick retreat,
And seek in haste my country seat;

In silent shades forgotten lie,
And learn to live before I die!
There, on the verdant turf reclined,
By wisdom's rules compose my mind;
My passions still, correct my heart,
And meliorate my better part:
Quit idle hope and fond desire,
And cease to gaze where fools admire:
With scorn the crowd profane behold
Enslaved by sordid thirst of gold,
Nor deign to bend at such a shrine
While priest of Phœbus and the Nine.
Nor would I shun the student's toil,
But feed my lamp with Grecian oil;
Sometimes through Stoic walks sublime
Up the rough steep of virtue climb;
From philosophic heights look down,
Nor heed if Fortune smile or frown;
In Wisdom's mantle closely furl'd,
Defy the tempests of the world;
And scorning all that's *not our own*,
Place every good in mind alone.
Then, sliding to an easier plan,
Put off the God to be the man;
Resolve the offer'd sweets to prove
Of social bowls, gay sports and love;
Give forward life its childish toy,
Nor blush to feel, and to enjoy.
Yet ever, as by humour led,
Each path of life in turn I tread,
Still to my first great maxim true,
On Moderation fix my view;
Let her with tempering sway preside
O'er pleasure's cup and Learning's pride;
And by her sage decrees o'er-rule
The maxims of each sturdy school.
Opinion thus may various play,
While Reason shines with steady ray,
And casts o'er all the shifting scene
Her sober hue, and light serene."

A long vacation from the cares of authorship was, however, in reality, neither the wish nor the fate of Mr. Aikin; and he embraced with satisfaction a proposal made to him by the proprietors of *Lewis's Experimental History of the Materia Medica* for a much enlarged and corrected edition of that work. During a considerable part of the year 1783, he was closely occupied by this design, and the result of his labours appeared in the subsequent year in a quarto volume. The execution of a task for which he well prepared by his previous study of chemistry and botany, was much approved by the faculty; and the work was re-printed with further enlargement and emendations, by the same hand, a few years afterwards.

The ages of his own elder children at this period, rendered education a subject of lively and augmenting interest to the mind of Mr. Aikin; and several designs were conceived by him for the entertainment and instruction of his own boys, which afterwards appeared matured and expanded in his various works for young people. A slight but spirited sketch of his leading opinions on this important topic is found in the following remarks, addressed to his sister, respecting a work which at that time greatly excited the public attention, and which he always mentioned with respect, and often quoted with applause for its many judicious remarks on particular points, notwithstanding the objections to its general system here stated.

"I have a hundred things to say both for and against Knox. I wish from my heart that you, with Mr. Barbauld's assistance, would write a criticism on him. His great fault, I think, is setting out with too confined a view of the ends of education, which must be as various as situations and characters in life are. Does he not breed them all for clergymen and schoolmasters? I should like a good comment on that excellent saying of Agesilaus, 'that the great business of education should be to instruct youth in what will be of use to them when they come to be men.' This plan will scarcely include Latin verses and the study of Greek dialects."

To teach *things* rather than *words*, will readily be understood to have been the aim of the author of the preceding remarks; and the first of his publications for the benefit of the juvenile part of the community, was intended to communicate a taste for such knowledge as he held useful to all. This little book, printed in 1784, was entitled The Calendar of Nature,—an elegant and instructive sketch of the most striking circumstances in animal and vegetable life, and the principal changes in the general face of nature attendant upon the revolution of the seasons in our latitudes. According to the manner of the writer, poetical motto's were affixed to each month; while apt quotations in verse liberally interspersed, served to promote in the mind of the youthful reader that alliance between *poetry* and *natural his-*

tory which he had ever so warmly at heart. The piece was well received, and went through more than one impression.*

About the end of 1783, the dissolution of the Warrington academy scattered the little knot of literary friends, whose congenial society had hitherto so happily disguised from one another the irksomeness and monotony of a contracted circle of acquaintance and an obscure scene of action. Mr. Aikin deeply felt the privation; but to check repining at inevitable evil was ever, in his estimation, the first rule of moral wisdom; and he applied himself to seeking, in the diligent exercise of his own powers, the best substitute for the animating intercourse of mind with mind. With Dr. Enfield, who alone of the former tutors remained on the spot, he occupied himself in the discussion of a variety of literary schemes, of which, though a considerable portion might prove abortive, several attained, sooner or later, a healthy maturity. One of his most elaborate critical pieces was begun at this period, the design of which he thus unfolded to his sister:

"I have another project in hand, which I want a hundred times to talk with you upon. I am writing an Essay on the allegorical personages introduced into poetry, such as Fame, Death, Despair, Fear, &c., and I have already made a pretty large collection of them. I reduce them to three classes: 1. Such personifications as only represent a human figure strongly impressed with a particular passion or quality; such as *Sleep* in Ovid, *Affectation* and *Ill-nature* in the Rape of the Lock. 2. Such as to this have some symbolical or emblematical addition; as *Envy* in Ovid, *Care* in Spenser. 3. Such as are entirely emblematical; as *Love, Death, Time, Fame,* as usually described. My plan is to collect a number of examples under each of these heads, to make some observations on each, and to establish some general rules for this part of poetry from the whole. My present sources are chiefly English poetry, especially Spenser. I suppose the Italian writers would afford a good deal, but they are locked up from me. I must see, however, Hoole's Ariosto. Will you bestow a little thought on this matter, and give me your opinion?

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* An enlargement of this work, adapted to readers of a riper age, and entitled The Natural History of the Year, was published by Arthur Aikin for Johnson, in 1799.

I assure you it is a very entertaining speculation, and will afford many fine quotations."

I know not how far he proceeded with his plan at this period; but it was not till many years afterwards, and when the treasures of Italian literature were no longer "locked up" from him, that he presented his Essay on Poetical Personification to the public* If in the present anarchical state of English poetry any partisans of *ancient rule* may be supposed to still exist, who believe the power of composing "immortal verse" to be an *art* as well as a *gift*,—who hold that the energies of genius are not checked, but invigorated, by the habit of obedience to the strict discipline of taste and judgment,—to them this piece will appear a valuable addition to the *school books* of every rising poet and every cultivated reader. It teaches the correct and consistent use of one of the most splendid ornaments of the more elevated species of poetry; and this, not by frigid precepts, but by examples drawn from the works of the greatest masters, and appreciated with sensibility, as well as dicernment.

The task of preparing a new edition of Mr. Howard's work on Prisons, with large additions, the fruit of another and very extensive tour undertaken by this eminent philanthropist, now procured Mr. Aikin the pleasure of his daily society during several months, and the satisfaction of exercising his literary skill in favour of his important and beneficient objects. Of the work in question he thus writes to his sister: "Mr. Howard is here printing his book, and will stay three or four months. His labours are most amazing, and a wonderful proof of what may be done by one man entirely devoted to a single object. Yet he has not, I think, a very enlarged mind, and will be chiefly useful as a collector of facts for others to reason upon. His narrow education (as he himself often laments) is an eternal and insuperable bar to him. In resolution, firmness, and integrity, he is unequalled."

But neither the dictates of that philosophic *moderation* which he cultivated, nor the pursuit of useful knowledge and of those amenities of literature which he loved, could longer disguise from a man of talents and activity, and the father of a growing family, the indisputable fact that he had not yet risen to his just level in society;—that the station which he held was neither in honour nor in profit a fair return for the study which he had bestowed on his profession, or his actual skill in it;—and that to sit down in passive acquiesence under the injustice of fortune might rather be regarded as tameness than virtue. The peculiar obstacles to the extension of his practice at Warrington became also more and more palpable. "We are encompassed round," he writes to his sister, "with large towns and men of established reputation; and even in this town most of the higher families are out of my line of connections. I had imagined a way was opened for pushing into better acquaintance, and this has in some degree happened; but I find intrigue and jealousy meeting me in every quarter; and as I cannot stoop to artifice of any kind, I am hardly a match for some of my rivals."

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* It was first printed in the Monthly Magazine, and afterwards in his Essays, Literary and Miscellaneous. Johnson & Co. 1811.

Under these circumstances, he determined to comply with the advice which had long been urged upon him by his best friends, and especially by his professional ones, to take his Doctor's degree, and aim at a higher line of practice. No consideration, however, could induce him to submit to the degradation of acquiring by purchase a title to which he felt himself qualified to advance a juster claim; and overlooking sources of academical honours nearer home, he fixed upon the truly respectable University of Leyden as the place of his intended graduation.

It was in the beginning of July, 1784, that he set out for London on his way to Holland, furnished with a thesis, to the composition of which he had given much study.* Here he was joined by a near connection, who wished to make this little trip in his company, and they pursued their journey without loss of time. A short journal which he kept on his tour, though written only for his own satisfaction, and the amusement of his family, appears so characteristic of his quick observation and various knowledge, that no apology, it is presumed, will be necessary for its insertion in this place.

"On July 6th, 1784, I left London about four in the afternoon in a post chaise, accompanied by Mr. K. The road for some miles through Bow and Stratford appeared like a continued town; from thence a flat unanimated country reaches to *Rumford*. After this, the country begins to be more varied and pleasant, with many gentlemen's seats, and neat cheerful farm-houses, mostly plastered over. We drove without stopping through *Chelmsford*, and only noticed the magnificent front of the new county gaol. Near this town are some hop gardens, which looked very agreeably. At half past nine we reached our inn at *Witham*. For the last five or six miles, it was too dusky for prospect.

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* Its title was *De Lactis Secretione in Puerperis.*

"July 7th. We left Witham at six, travelling through a flat corn country, bare of people, and affording few objects, to *Colchester*. This is a pretty large well built old town, very quiet, and abounding with remains of antiquity. We viewed the castle, a large strong square fortress, entire on the outside. It brought to my mind the famous siege of Colchester in the civil wars, when Goring and Lucas made such a gallant defence.

"From hence we proceeded through a similar but rougher country to *Manningtree*, where we came at once in sight of the estuary which separates Essex from Suffolk. At low water there is but a narrow channel, with large marshes on each side, smelling disagreeably, and looking like the native soil of agues and fevers.

"A pleasant varied country leads from hence to *Harwich*, which we reached at noon, a small neat port town, very pleasantly situated on an extremity of land opposite the German Ocean. Here we passed the time by strolling about the town and along the beach, picking up sea plants and shells, and looking at the fishing vessels running in and out. The weather was perfectly fine, and all objects gay and pleasant. After a tedious waiting for the mail, we hurried on board the packet near eight o'clock.

"We fell down the river with the tide, and sailed close under *Landguard-fort*, a large handsome fortress on a low point of land, which commands the entrance. On clearing the harbour, we found a brisk but contrary wind. The evening was fine and warm, with frequent lightning in the horizon, and the moon silvering the waves. Not being able to advance, we cast anchor, when the vessel heaved and rolled considerably.

"July 8th. At three in the morning I came on deck, and saw the sun rising like a vast ball of fire out of the ocean. The vessel was under sail again, with frequent tacks and little advance. Contrary winds and calms prevailed all that day and the following night.

"July 9th. The wind freshened and became fairer. The vessel went steadier, and all the passengers ate a tolerable breakfast, and came on deck again. In the afternoon land was descried, and all sickness and low spirits vanished. We ran in with a fair gale, and were much amused at the various objects on shore becoming more and more distinct, and opening one after another. We sailed close along the shore of the isle of *Goeree*, and at five in the evening landed at *Helvoetsluys*.

"We were extremely struck with the Dutch neatness apparent in the pavement and whole outsides of the houses in this little town. After a dish of tea in our inn, we waited on Mynheer Commissary, a brisk chattering fellow, who made us drink a bottle of bad claret with him (not without paying, however,) while he sent for carriages. We two, with a French and Dutch gentleman, got an old fashioned clumsy coach for ourselves, and a wagon for our baggage, and proceeded for the Brill.

"Our road led through low marshy land, which in most other countries would have been quite neglected, but here was highly cultivated, producing corn, flax, madder, potatoes, &c. The farm houses were neat and substantial. There were many aquatic birds in the fields, very tame; among which we were particularly struck with the stork. At half past eight we arrived at the *Brill*, the gates of which were shut, so that we were obliged to give in our names and pay a trifle for admission. We crossed a fine double bridge at the entrance.

"July 10th. I rose at six, impatient to view the new world I was got into. On going out, I found all the servant girls busy in mopping and scrubbing before their doors. They were dressed in round caps coming low on the forehead, ear-rings, short jackets, a sort of bell-hoops, and slippers. Most had a large black patch on one or both temples, which we were told was a remedy for the tooth-ache. The morning was mistling, which did not prevent me from walking through some of the streets under the continued rows of trees. After breakfast it cleared up, and we walked to the side of the Maes, where we were ferried over to a low island, which lies in the middle of the river. Here we got a wagon for ourselves and baggage. It had swinging seats at the fore part on which we were placed, and our baggage was piled behind; and we drove away very merrily about three miles, when we had crossed the island, and came to another ferry. This landed us on the continent at *Maeslandsluys*, which is a busy populous town, with a small port full of vessels. Upon the quay were great quantities of fine salt fish in barrels. It was market day, and the shops and stalls were dressed out in all the pride of Dutch brilliancy and finery. We just walked through the town, and embarked in a *treck-schuyt* on the great Delft canal. The weather was clear and hot. We rode on the roof of the boat, and with great pleasure viewed all the surrounding objects. Many towns and villages were in sight on both sides; and we passed through rich meadows full of cattle. The canal is very broad and straight, but we met with few vessels. About two we arrived at

"*Delft.* This is a very pleasing town, with canals and rows of trees in most of the streets, and many very good houses. The square with the town house on one side, and the new church on the other, has an air of magnificence. In two of the churches we viewed the tombs of some of the greatest men in the modern history. These were Admirals Tromp and Peter Hein, Grotius, and William I. Prince of Orange. The noble mausoleum erected for the Orange family, with the statue of William, the great assertor of liberty, excited in me sentiments of the profoundest veneration.

"The Dutch churches which I saw are large lofty buildings, with no other ornaments than a number of scutcheons painted with the arms of families buried there, and hung upon the pillars. There are no pews, but a vast number of chairs and benches.

"Here we parted with our two companions, and set off after four in the Hague boat. The voyage was most amusing and striking, the banks of the canal being one continued range of villas, gardens, pleasure-houses, windmills, rows of trees, &c. Numerous vessels were continually passing and repassing. In a short time we reached the *Hague.* Here we took up our quarters at the *Marechal de Turenne,* a French hotel, very elegant and spacious. After tea we made a tour of the best part of the town under the conduct of a French *valet de place.*

"The union of the Dutch neatness with the magnificence of a court, in this place, is extremely striking. It is an assemblage of fine streets and squares, with houses worthy of the title of palaces, in a variety of beautiful architecture, exceeding much, as I thought, the best parts of London. Some of the older squares in London, as Grosvenor, Hanover, &c., if they were thrown into a continued group, with their connecting streets, would give the best idea of it. But more of the buildings are of stone, and in a grander style; and the fine rows of trees are a great ornament to them. The side pavement, however, is neither so commodious nor beautiful as in London.

"There seemed to be little hurry and bustle in the streets, and few marks of opulence and gaiety: but many families were gone to their country habitations. The few carriages we saw were mostly in the old heavy style, here and in other parts of Holland. Some light English carriages, indeed, were now and then to be seen.

"After supper I found by great accident that my old friend the Rev. Mr. A. was in the house. We joined company with him and his friend Mr. H., and spent a most agreeable evening.

"July 11th. (Sunday.) Mr. H., A., and myself, walked before breakfast to *Scheveling.* The road is a perfectly straight avenue of several rows of trees for a mile and half,—striking, but rather tiresome. Scheveling is a large fishing village, on the open beach. Its neatness could not prevent it from smelling abominably of fish. The shore is composed of whole and broken shells, protected by a range of sand hills, held together by the star grass. An uniform line of sixty fishing barks all nearly alike and placed at equal distances, lay before the place. On our return, we met with several open carriages full of men and women going for a Sunday's ramble, some singing and noisy, unlike our idea of Dutch gravity.

"After breakfast we walked to the parade, where some horse and foot guards were marching round and round to fine music. The Prince of Orange was here, holding a kind of levee. He is a heavy looking ill made man; but seemed affable and good tempered. We followed him on his walk to the *House in the Wood,* about a mile from the town; and were diverted with the odd motley group which composed his *suite.* There were three or four officers, a running footman, about half a dozen low people who followed close at his heels, among whom was one sedately smoking his pipe, and perfuming the whole company; a shabby fellow followed, whistling in imitation of a nightingale; and we four composed the rear. The prince walked in his boots, bareheaded; and occasionally stopped by the way to converse with some ladies whom he met. The road is a tolerably pleasant walk through a wood.

"Mr. K. and I went into the *House in the Wood,* which is a very neat building, about the size of the Queen's palace in St. James's park. Some handsome apartments were shown to us; and one very fine one, the ball room, decorated with fine paintings, mostly relating to the actions of Frederick Henry of Orange.

"We dined in our inn at the ordinary, with several officers and other gentlemen. All spoke French, but too rapidly for me to understand much. In the dining room was a picture of our late Duke of Cumberland, who resided some time at this hotel.

"At half after four we set off in the boat for Leyden. The canal for about three miles is bordered with a continued range of sumptuous pleasure houses and gardens, in the height of the Dutch taste, with tall cut hedges, long vistos, berceau walks, statues, aviaries, and parterres. The summer houses were full of people drinking tea and smoking. At a village where we changed boats, a kind of fair was held, with various sorts of diversions, very different from a Sunday's scene with us. Nearer Leyden the canal becomes very broad, with fine extensive meadows on each side. Numerous small painted summer houses and gardens announced the vicinity of *Leyden,* where we arrived at half past seven. Here we rejoined Messrs. H. and A., and walked about the town till dark. We supped together, in I know not what fashion, upon two hot joints of meat.

"July 12th. After breakfast we all sallied forth, and I called at several places to make myself known, in doing which I was obliged to make all possible use of my broken French. My recommendatory letters were of little service, the principal person to whom they were addressed being dead; but the books I took with me served as an introduction. Mr. H. and Mr. A. left us in the forenoon. After dinner I waited by appointment on the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Sandifort, and underwent an easy colloquial examination in Latin. The subjects were chiefly anatomical. I understood the professor's Dutch pronounciation better than I expected, and made a shift to answer him tolerably.

"We saw the *Burgh,* a curious artificial mount in the midst of the city, with a sort of fortification at top; and the *Stadt house,* a fine old building, in which are some paintings of Lucas Van Leyden. A remarkable one of the last judgment, rather comic than terrible, and a striking representation of the raising of the memorable seige of Leyden, attracted our principal notice.

"As every Dutch town is clean, the great neatness of Leyden ceased to be so striking; but we were really struck on passing through several populous streets inhabited by weavers, which were as clean as the best parts of the city.

"July 13th. At twelve I went to the College, where I was to be examined before the Dean and Faculty of Medicine. The whole Faculty was represented by Professor Oosterdyk. He was the examiner this day. His questions chiefly related to the diagnostics and cure of diseases. They were fair and candid, and the business was got through with ease. I had two aphorisms of Hippocrates given me to comment upon against the next day, which made me as busy in the evening as a school boy with his task. I also went over all my thesis with a Latin schoolmaster, who seemed a clever man, and had nothing pedantic in his appearance.

"We walked about various other parts of the town, and particularly through more streets of manufacturers, not *quite* so clean as before represented, but all wonderfully quiet and orderly. Very few children are to be seen in the streets; and the lively mischievous character of a *boy*, as it appears in England and other places, seems not to exist here. Contrary to what I had expected, we found the Dutch to be a very civil and polite people. Even the lower sort frequently pull off their hats to one another in the streets, and make way for each other in passing.

"July 14th. At noon I read over my commentary on the Aphorisms before the same professors. Dr. Sandifort oppugned a little in the logical forms, but the business was soon over. We saw the botanical garden, and a collection of natural history belonging to the College; but neither of them struck me much.

"We strolled a good deal about the town this day, and almost finished our survey of it. Leyden is a large, handsome, and well built city, with many very good houses, but few buildings that can be called grand or magnificent. It is remarkably still and quiet, and seems on the decline, many houses in all the streets being to be let or sold. At the same time, there is nothing ruinous or shabby. Even the pleasure houses in the gardens are all kept in perfect repair.

"The sober uniformity of the Dutch now begins to grow tiresome. There is nothing gay or joyous; no amusements of a lively cast. After business is over, the grave burgher goes to his garden without the walls, and smokes his pipe in a summer house.

"We drank tea with a grave young physician, who showed us his large collection of diseased bones.

"July 15th. In the morning I sent my thesis to the press; and afterwards viewed the anatomical theatre and preparations. After dinner I got the first proof sheet; and having corrected it, and left proper directions about the remainder, we set off at four in the Haarlem boat. We sailed along a broad very straight canal, through fine meadows with many plantations of trees, but few people. The sand hills on the sea shore were in view on the left during most of the voyage. We were struck with the civility of the passengers in boats, who generally saluted each other on meeting. The masters of the treck-schuyts are commonly decent substantial men who converse familiarly with their passengers.

"At eight we reached *Haarlem*. We walked about till dark, and then returned to supper at the ordinary, where the company all spoke Dutch. The landlady, however, who was at the table spoke French very well.

"July 16th. We were abroad in good time to view the town. The cathedral is an extremely large old building, and is well situated in a handsome opening. We *saw*, but did not *hear*, the famous organ, which reaches from the floor of the church to the roof. In the old part of Haarlem the streets are narrow; and the rows of trees are planted so near the houses, that they look like a fan before a lady's face at church. The new town has some handsome streets, one in particular which we admired greatly. A fine broad canal runs in the midst, with handsome bridges; and on each side is a broad pavement, with rows of lofty trees, and some very noble houses, the inhabitants of which, we were told, are chiefly Anabaptists. Our guide also took us to the *wood*, adjoining and belonging to the city, of which the people are very proud. It is cut into stars, avenues, &c. and neatly kept; but the trees are contemptible. About it are many elegant pleasure houses, some belonging to the Amsterdam merchants. The famous florists' gardens, too, are hereabouts; and we saw vast numbers of bulbous roots drying upon frames.

"At eleven we embarked in the boat for Amsterdam. The canal is extremely straight and handsome. Half way we got out of our boat, and walked across a narrow neck of land, between the Haarlem-meer on the one hand, and the Y, an arm of Zuyder-zee on the other. The prospect is very fine; and we could clearly distinguish Saardam in North Holland, with its wind-mills, as numerous as houses in many towns.

"The approach to Amsterdam is less striking than to several other Dutch towns, few great objects presenting themselves to the eye. We saw near us to the left, for some miles, the great dykes or banks to keep out the sea; over the tops of which the masts and sails of vessels appeared. After one we arrived at

"*Amsterdam.* We walked above a mile through crooked narrow streets, full of people, to our inn. Here we dined at an ordinary with a company mostly English, merchants' clerks, ship captains, &c. In the afternoon, we visited the Stadt-house, a most noble square building, well situated in a considerable opening. We ascended to the cupola, and thence had a very fine view over the whole city and the circumjacent country, with the Zuyder-zee and Haarlem-meer. The size of Amsterdam appeared to us about a third of London. Its figure is semi-circular, the harbour being its centre. The ships appear very numerous, but they occupy a much less extent than those in the Thames at London.

"Our friends H. and A. had reached this city before us, and we spent the evening with the latter, and a minister of one of the English churches.

"July 17th. After breakfast we set out with Mr. A. to view the place. We went first to the Jews' quarter, a number of streets inhabited solely by this people, who are confined to it. It is extremely populous, and full of odd faces and dresses. We stepped into the Portuguese Jews' synagogue, a very large fine building. It was their sabbath, and we staid part of the service, which was reading the Hebrew psalter. One man, in a kind of elevated stage railed round, read in a sort of chaunting tone; and every now and then the whole congregation struck in, making a strange discordant clamour. Many were conversing together; and the appearance of the assembly was the furthest possible from indicating reverence and devotion. The men had all a sort of towel wrapt round them. The women were in a latticed gallery and scarcely visible. We saw also the German Jews' synagogue, which is not so large.

"From thence we made a tour of the port, docks, &c. Every thing wore the face of business, but without noise or confusion.

Nothing pleased us more than a visit to one of the *Rhine boats*. These are very long capacious vessels, with two low masts, which carry goods and passengers to and from Germany along the Rhine. On the deck are raised a set of rooms or cabins for passengers. We went on board one of these, and were invited by a very neat, civil German woman to view the apartments. There was a suit of three or four rooms, not only clean, but elegant, hung with prints, adorned with china, painted wainscots, handsome bed furniture, and in short as finished as any lady's chamber, At the end was a small kitchen, with the utensils as bright as new. The good woman seemed highly satisfied with the marks of pleasure and surprise we showed on the occasion.

"We walked through some of the best streets, the Keysers-graft, Keeren-graft, &c. which run semi-circularly from one side of the harbour to the other. We saw many very capital houses, but rather obscured by the rows of trees before them. The canals are nasty and offensive; and, on the whole, Amsterdam is far from being an agreeable place.

"After dinner we visited the Stadt-house again, and saw the principal rooms, many of which are very fine, and furnished with admirable paintings. Of these, none struck me so much as those relating to the Dutch history. Among them is an admirable piece of Rembrandt, and another of Vandyke, with real portraits of many of the principal persons. There is a very striking picture of the ratification of the treaty by which the United Provinces were declared independent. The Spanish ambassador and the first magistrate of Amsterdam are represented as giving hands. The countenance of the former shows depression and chagrin; of the latter, an honest frankness and satisfaction. The subjects of these pictures, with their antique habits and manners, gave me a lively idea of the heroic times of Holland.

"In the evening we saw more of the best parts of the town, and many truly grand buildings. We also revisited the Jews' quarter. Nothing can be more striking than the entire change of feature, air, dress, and manners, that you meet with on crossing a little bridge; so that one might imagine oneself suddenly transported a thousand miles. The Dutch with plain, heavy, undisguised looks, unanimated, generally fair and with light hair. The Jew sharp, designing, dark; the women frequently handsome, though brown, with black wanton eyes and lively gestures. Among the old men were several excellent Shylock faces. The contrast was rendered greater by its being sabbath on the Jewish side, and Saturday on the Dutch.

"July 18th. At ten we left Amsterdam, riding to the boat in a hackney coach set upon a sledge, holding only two persons face to face, and drawn by one horse. The driver walks on one side and behind, having long rope reins. We got to Haarlem to dinner. From thence to Leyden we were obliged to go in the fore part of the boat, as a company had hired all the better end, or roof as they call it. We had, however, very decent company, among whom were some chatty women, who made me regret that I could not understand their conversation. At six we reached Leyden, where I found my thesis printed, and all in readiness.

"July 19th. This was my *grand day.* I was at the college at eleven. The Rector Magnificus, medical professors, and several others, were assembled in the senate room. After waiting half an hour, I was called in, and desired to read some passages in my thesis, which the medical professors *pro forma* attacked, and I defended as well as I could. This was over by twelve, when the ceremony began, which consisted only in administering a Latin oath, and formally pronouncing me *Doctor,* with all the rights and privileges thereunto belonging. I then made my bow, and all was over.

"Afterwards, I was shown Albinus's elegant anatomical preparations by Professor Sandifort, who at the same time exhibited them to two ladies. I then went to our inn, where we packed up, dined, paid our bill, and left Leyden at half past two in the Delft boat. From Delft we proceeded by boat to *Rotterdam,* where we arrived past nine in a heavy rain. We got a hackney coach to convey us to our inn.

"July 20th. My first visit in the morning was to the statue of Erasmus, a noble monument to the memory of that admirable genius. He stands on a high pedestal, in his Doctor's habit, intent on his book, just above the heads of the market people; forming an odd contrast to their busy occupations. After breakfast, we extended our walk about the town, and in our way called on Mr. H. a bookseller, to whom I had a letter. He spoke English well, and had quite the manners of an Englishman. He accompanied us to the *Baumkeys,* a fine row of houses, most nobly situated on the bank of the Maes, which is broader than the Thames, and all alive with shipping. I was somewhat puzzled with the date of a large house here, 5482, till I learned it was built by a Jew; and the Jews date from the creation. We observed many English inscriptions on the shops in various parts of the town.

"We dined at the ordinary, with a pretty large company, who all spoke Dutch. A lady, young and modest, came and sat down amongst us, without seeming disconcerted; indeed the men did not put her out of countenance by taking much notice of her. After dinner we repeated our walk, and viewed good part of the town. Rotterdam is a large handsome city, finely situated for commerce, the canals bringing large ships up to the merchants' doors. There are vast stores of all sorts of valuable commodities. We saw some large men of war building and repairing; and some very splendid yachts belonging to various public companies.

"We drank tea at Mr. H's father's, and found a family almost English, the mother being an English woman. The daughter could not have been distinguished from a native of England. In the evening we went to a public house, close by the ferry of the Maes, where we passed the night to be ready against morning.

"July 21st. We were called up before four, when I had but just got to sleep. Our carriage, a shabby two-wheeled chaise, with two horses, was put into a ferry boat, which landed us on an island in the Maes. We drove across this, and came to the other channel of the Maes, which we also crossed after a considerable delay. From this ferry we proceeded some miles across the *Isle of Voorn*, till we came to a considerable village on the bank of a large arm of the sea, called *Holland's Diep*, which divides Holland from Brabant, and goes down to Helvoetsluys. Here we left our chaise, and crossed in a bark, with a number of people, the wind blowing very fresh, and water dashing over the sides.

"We landed at *Willemstadt*, a small town regularly fortified, where we were obliged to give our names. Here we breakfasted, and got another chaise, more clumsy and jolting than the first, but with able horses and a brisk driver. After some time we came to another ferry, but a short one. The way, so far, lay through a very low country, with fine corn fields, flax, madder, and beans, not populous, with scattered farm houses very like those in England. The road generally ran on the top of a straight high bank, with trees planted on the slope. We travelled for some time on the banks of a small river flowing through marshes on which were flocks of water fowl.

"About noon we reached *Rosendael,* a mean town, full of soldiers, who seemed to be quartered in every private house. They were a German regiment in the service of the States; stationed there, no doubt, to form a communication between Breda and Bergen-op-zoom.

"After baiting here, we proceeded, and soon came to the frontier of Dutch and Austrian Brabant. Our arrival in a Roman Catholic country was at once discovered by a handsome village church, with a crucifix at the east end, and crosses over the graves. Brabant is a very sandy soil, and the roads are extremely heavy. Oats and buck wheat are the chief growth of the cultivated parts, but there are large heaths which extend quite into Germany. On one of these I got out and botanised a little. A very extensive one brought us in sight of Atwerp, as yet at a considerable distance. The prospect on each side was bounded only by the horizon, and many fine steeples were in view all round. We passed some large plantations formed on the waste, with new farm houses interspersed; and at length got into the high road from Breda to Antwerp, which is a fine pavement, perfectly straight, and bordered with rows of trees. The country here is rich, inclosed, and highly cultivated. Before six we reached

"*Antwerp.* The approach to this city struck us wonderfully by the view of its steeples, high ramparts, broad foss, and embattled towers. The custom house officers visited us at the gates, but were easily satisfied without opening our baggage. After drinking coffee at our inn (which was a very handsome one, and had the honour two or three years before of lodging the Emperor) we walked about the town attended by a *valet de place.* The mixture of religious edifices with ancient stone houses, reminded us of Oxford; while the Madonnas and saints at every corner, crucifixes in the streets, and odd figures of monks and priests, presented a scene perfectly new to us. We walked round half the ramparts to that part of the city which is washed by the Scheldt, a fine river, nearly as broad as the Thames, but having only a few barks upon it. We returned through what had been the trading part of the town, and took a melancholy survey of grass-grown quays, weedy canals, dilapidated warehouses, and close streets thronged with houses, but almost destitute of inhabitants. The famous exchange of Antwerp, as large as those of London and Amsterdam, has its walks obstructed with shabby boarded booths, used as paltry shops at the fair.

An old woman selling muscles was the only commercial occupier of the place.

"The town-house is a very large building, scarcely inferior in size to that of Amsterdam; and must have been the finest in Europe when built. It looks sadly desolate and neglected. The houses in this part of the town are very high, and of a singular architecture, magnificent in their day, but now antiquated. The steeple of the cathedral church is a high gothic tower of most unparalleled lightness and elegance.

"The gloominess of this city is augmented by the dismal dress of the women; the maid servants wearing a large square piece of black stuff over their heads like a hood; and women of the better sort, a kind of long cloak of white camblet with a hood, almost concealing their faces.

"July 22d. After breakfast we sallied forth to view pictures and churches. We first saw a private collection, then St. James's church, the academy of painting or school of Rubens, and lastly the cathedral church of Notre Dame All the fine pieces we saw were eclipsed by the master-piece of Rubens in this last church, the taking down from the cross, with the Annunciation on one side and the Purification on the other. It is impossible to conceive painting to go beyond this; but the solemnity of the effect is somewhat diminished by being shown the portraits of Rubens's three wives among the figures.

"The splendour and dignity of the objects in this church, the paintings, statues, marble, sculpture and gilding, with the sumptuous habits of the priests officiating, were very imposing on the mind, and powerfully apologised to me for the attachment shown to so childish and irrational a religion. Nothing struck me more than the fixed statue-like attention of the people who were paying their devotions in different parts of the church. Not a look was turned aside as we passed before them. In some the finest attitudes and expressions of humility and devotion were to seen; and I could not doubt but a great deal also was *felt* by the heart; but the nature and value of those feelings seemed very equivocal. The Madonna of Rubens must excite emotions in the most insensible, and, in fact, the Virgin seems to have usurped all honours here. She is the Venus of the Roman Catholic worship; a chaster Venus, but still conveying the idea of a beautiful female. There are in this church two very fine and affecting pictures, the death and ascension of the Virgin.

"The women at prayers were wrapt up in their white cloaks and hoods, which prevented the necessity of all *dress* at this early time of the day.

"At eleven we crossed the Scheldt in a boat, and got a chaise on the other side to carry us to Ghent. We proceeded through an inclosed and highly cultivated country, growing much corn, buck wheat, and fine flax. The road in some parts was very heavy and sandy. We dined at a small inn in a village called *Westminster.* From thence the country became more populous, and we passed one considerable town where there seemed to be a manufacture of linen. Several fine villages lay in our road, among which was one extremely neat, most of the houses being white, sashed, with green window shutters. I got out at one place and walked, while the chaise was baiting, along a pleasant road with rows of trees, under which was a cheerful group of people dressing green flax. One of the men conversed with me in French.

"Near eight we arrived at *Ghent;* the evening so rainy that we could not stir out. Our inn here had the appearance of having been a nobleman's house. It also boasted of having lodged the Emperor; and it lodged us very well.

"July 23d. We left Ghent at eight, taking a coach (as it still rained) to the canal. All we saw of this city was therefore, in driving throught it. It appears a large old town, with many grand buildings.

"We embarked on the Bruges canal on board a vessel with one mast, very elegantly fitted up, with a very handsome cabin at each end, and a kitchen and other rooms between. The quarter deck was covered with an awning. The company was a motley group of ladies, gentlemen, priests and common people. We had an agreeable party, in one of the cabins, of some gentlemen and two ladies from Bruges, who spoke French as their native tongue. They were polite and well educated, brown and rather thin, with black eyes and easy lively manners. I remarked some circumstances which showed that *female delicacy* was not quite the same thing in Flanders as in England.

"We proceeded slowly, drawn against the wind by horses. A dinner was cooked on board, and fifteen or sixteen of us sat down to it, among whom were half a dozen priests, who joined with cheerfulness and good appetite. It was a meagre day, and we had fish in various fashions, well dressed and neatly served up. Our wine was laid in ice.

"The Flemish seem in general much livelier than the Dutch. French is very commonly understood by all ranks; and those who read are acquainted with French and English literature.

"We drank tea on board, and reached *Bruges* between four and five. We were obliged to go immediately from the bark to the Ostend diligence; so we saw nothing of Bruges but in driving through it. We passed a handsome market place and town house; but the buildings in general seemed inferior to Antwerp and Ghent.

"In the diligence were nine people, exclusive of a child at the breast. Though our machine was none of the most commodious, we were jumbled into good humour. We baited half way, when our women passengers by means of a draught of small brisk white wine were thrown into a very merry humour, and we had nothing afterwards but giggling and laughing, especially from one young woman, pretty, and very voluble in Flemish French. The road was a pavement, very straight, through a sandy country where many potatoes are grown.

"We reached *Ostend* at half past nine, and went to a very comfortable (but dear) English house, where we supped in our own fashion with a company almost all English.

"July 24th. I was up early, and paid a visit to the principal church, a tawdry place, with much Roman Catholic finery. Some persons were already paying their devotions. On returning, I was much surprised and pleased to find Mr. and Mrs. E. in our inn, come on purpose from Bruges to see me. We walked over the town with them and their daughter, a girl of about ten, who speaks four languages. Ostend is a tolerable town, with many handsome new buildings run up during the war Its busy days seemed almost over, though the arrival of some imperial East Indiamen had thrown a little life on the place. We observed several of the sailors, with very dusky faces, straw hats and singular dresses, offering trinkets to sell.

"After passing a most agreeable morning and dining all together at the ordinary, we took a reluctant leave of our friends, and embarked at half past four in a small Margate vessel. Dr. K. a young English physician, to whom I had introduced myself at Ostend, was one of our company. There were, besides, a foreign gentleman, a French quack and his wife, and an old Fleming.

"The wind was almost directly contrary: and we were obliged to make many tacks before we could clear the harbour. The night was boisterous; the vessel pitched much, and we made a very slow advance.

"July 25th. Wind still contrary and high. We descried the North Foreland soon in the afternoon, but approached it very slowly. At length we saw the white cliffs distinctly. Porpoises were tumbling around us; and the birds called divers, swimming among the high waves, sometimes disappearing, and then riding sublime on the very ridge of the wave, amused us much. We were so long in working into the harbour, that we did not land till past nine at night at *Margate*.

"July 26th. We rose very early, and viewed the town, finely situated on the open sea, from which it is protected by a natural and uniform wall of chalk rocks running for miles along the shore. There are several handsome new buildings in the London style for the accommodation of bathers, and many bathing machines lie round the bason. Before six we set off with Dr. K. in a chaise for London, were we arrived at six in the evening."

From London the new graduate returned to his family at Warrington, but with the intention of quitting the place whenever such prospects should open to him in any other town as might justify the experiment of removal.

After some months spent in inquiries, he received information of a vacancy about to occur by the departure of one of the two physicians who divided the practice of the town of Yarmouth in Norfolk; and this intelligence was accompanied with such assurances of support from some of the inhabitants, to whom his connections were well known, as determined him to settle there. Notwithstanding the circumstances which had rendered him justly dissatisfied with his professional situation at Warrington, his feelings on the near prospect of departure made him sensible, that in the way of social and friendly enjoyment he had many sacrifices to make in quitting that county which had extended so affectionate an adoption to his parents, his sister, and himself; and which was the scene of all the dearest recollections of his youth, and the birth place of his children. The position of Warrington enabled him to keep up an agreeable intercourse with his friends at Chester, and especially with the dearest and most intimate of them, Dr. Haygarth;—it afforded similar or greater facilities with respect to his Manchester connections, who had recently marked their respect for him by electing him a member of their newly established Philosophical and Literary Society:—and its station between this place and Liverpool gave him the advantage of the half way meetings which often took place between the members of the medical profession belonging to these two populous and rising towns. Some circumstances of this nature procured him occasional interviews with Dr. Percival and Dr. Bell of Manchester, with Dr. Dobson of Liverpool, and especially with the late Dr. James Currie of the same place. Towards this accomplished, enlightened, and eminently excellent person, he found himself so strongly attracted by a similarity of tastes and pursuits, and a conformity of views on some of the most important topics of human speculation, that a very little more opportunity was alone wanting to mature what was already social intimacy into perfect friendship; and enough was done to impress both parties with a lasting esteem, and an unfailing concern for each other's welfare, and to confer on the very few opportunities of intercourse which were afterwards granted them, a character of the most lively interest.*

He had likewise enjoyed opportunities of forming other acquaintances among the inhabitants of Liverpool which he justly regarded as equally agreeable and advantageous. The distinguished biographer of Lorenzo de' Medici and Leo X., then young and unknown to the world, but already *credited* by his friends for the various abilities which he has since made manifest, was one of those whose society he peculiarly valued, and whose character he contemplated with the most cordial sentiments of esteem and affection;—these sentiments were mutual, and their strength has since been proved by a friendship which knew but one termination.†

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* The present writer, who, many years since, enjoyed much of the pleasure and advantage of Dr. Currie's society during a visit to Liverpool, can never forget the minute and earnest manner in which he questioned her respecting her father's sentiments on many interesting and momentous subjects; and the animated expression of pleasure with which he exclaimed, at the end of this examination—"Then he is the same man I knew twenty years ago!"

† The following particulars of the early period of their acquaintance, communicated to me by Mr. Roscoe himself, are too characteristic as well as pleasing to be

With so many social ties to be broken, Dr. Aikin might be excused for regarding his removal to a distant part of the kingdom, where he possessed not a single friend and scarcely even an acquaintance, as a severe trial of fortitude. He thus expresses himself respecting it to Dr. Haygarth, by whose persuasions chiefly he had been urged to assume his new character.——"Should any thing prevent your coming hither, I shall certainly make a point of visiting you before my departure, for God knows when we shall meet again. If success in my profession was not the first concern in my situation, I should be strongly disposed to reject any offers which would remove me so far from friends I cordially love and esteem. But we are in a world that demands continual sacrifices, and happiness is only to be acquired by accommodating ourselves with good humour to our several necessities."

It was at the close of the year 1784 that Dr. Aikin with his family quitted Warrington on their journey to Norfolk: his excellent mother, who had resided in his house from the period of her husband's death, resolved still to accompany the dearest objects of her affection; but stopping by the way at the house of her daughter in Suffolk, she there manifested symptoms of decay which in a short period terminated in her death. The rest of the family speedily arrived at the place of their destination, and began to examine with eager interest the new scenes which opened upon them.

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omitted.——"It is a satisfaction to my mind to express to one so dear to him the sincere and affectionate attachment I entertained for him, and the gratitude I owe to him for the advantages derived from his friendship and society at an early period of my life. My long acquaintance with him is indeed connected with the most pleasing recollections. From having accompanied him to his little botanical garden in the vicinity of Warrington, I first imbibed a relish for those pursuits; and I well remember that, on his recommendation, I was first led to the perusal of the modern writers of Latin poetry, which has since afforded me an inexhaustible source of pleasure."

In reference to the modern Latin poets, I would observe, that it is somewhat remarkable that the admiration which my father certainly entertained for them, has not left stronger traces in his works. Two translations, however, of short pieces, one of them by Fracastorius, the other by Janus Etruscus, are included in his volume of poems. I know that he accounted Fracastorius as the first of these writers, especially in the didactic style: the others whom he most admired were Sadoletus, Pontanus, Sannazaro, Politianus, and—for classical purity of style rather than originality or brilliancy of imagination—Bembus. The Psalms of Buchanan stood very high in his estimate in the class of translations, and some of Jortin's odes, especially that *Ad Tempus*, he considered as of first rate excellence. Full accounts of the Latin poets of modern Italy are contained in Mr. Roscoe's Life of Leo the Tenth.

Planted on a narrow strip of sand jutting out into the German Ocean, and exposed to the full fury of the north-eastern blasts which sweep along that flat unsheltered coast, and suffer not a tree or a bush to raise its head with impunity,—nothing can easily be imagined more dreary than the situation of Yarmouth and the immediately adjacent country. The town itself, however, though strangely cramped in its mode of building within the circuit of its ancient walls, is recommended by a striking air of cheerfulness and neatness, and boasts one of the finest quays in the kingdom. The manners of the lower class are remarkably decent and civilised; and as much of literature and refinement prevailed at this time among the richer part of the community, as could reasonably be expected in a commercial town of the second rank, occupying a remote corner of the island.

There was no cause for complaint in the reception given to the newly-arrived family by the general society of the place. A considerable number of the principal people commenced an acquaintance with them, and it soon appeared that they might be occupied in visiting even more than they desired. But a very short trial was sufficient to convince Dr. Aikin that he had been considerably deceived, both as to the whole quantity of medical practice which the town was capable of affording, and the proportion of it which was likely to fall to his share. The other physician was already established and well supported; and as the field was clearly too narrow for two, he was speedily persuaded that he had not yet found a lasting settlement; though he felt it the part of wisdom to afford himself time for a fair trial of the resources of his present situation. Under these impressions, it may readily be imagined that the first year of his residence at Yarmouth was one of the most anxious periods of his life; and not a little credit seems due to the spirit of practical philosophy and the disposition to be easily pleased and interested, apparent in the following passages of letters written to his sister during this period.

April 7th, 1785. "While *you* have had Siberian blasts, we at Yarmouth have not altogether lived on zephyrs. The cry of our night watchmen, 'North-north-east is the wind—North-north-east,' had become perfectly familiar to our ears; and the grand sight of about five hundred ships at anchor waiting for a southern breeze, had lost all its effect upon us, from its duration. From Monday things have changed a little, but the wind has again got round to its old quarter—My poor *Calendar* has appeared at an unfortunate time for its credit, and I doubt it will be reckoned as fallacious as Poor Robin or Wing.

"Thanks for your invitation of G——. He and we gladly accept it, and you will perhaps shortly see us whisking it over your green in a *Yarmouth cart.** He is a useful man, though, to us, in our rambles with the children by the seaside, where my wife and I are as much amused as the young ones in picking up shells, pebbles, and sea weed. We are beginning to make a *collection*, or *museum*, if you please, which you may one day view with much delight and instruction. I do not intend, however, to turn showman, like Sir Ashton, as I begin to have a prospect of a better trade in my own profession. I assure you, things mend upon me, and all the world does not continue so obstinately healthy, or so afraid of a physician. I have had, and now have, *some* patients. My rival is one of my most familiar and agreeable acquaintance, and I find several more whose company is better than none."

Late in the month of September, writing to Mrs. Barbauld, who was then on a tour in France, he describes himself as without medical employment at that time; and laments that the publication of Rousseau's *Letters on Botany*, with some additional ones by Mr. Martyn, had superseded a favourite scheme of his own; but consoles himself with the translation of Tacitus which he had resumed as a winter employment. He mentions the pleasure of a visit from his beloved friend Dr. Enfield, whom a fortunate invitation from a congregation at Norwich had now brought to reside within twenty miles of him; and afterwards he proceeds thus:

"We have had a good deal of amusement here from the annual visit of the Dutch fishermen. About fifty of their schuyts came up our river, and lay for three or four days at the quay, in an uniform regular line. The town was filled with great breeches, and on the Sunday all the country flocked in to see the sight, so that the whole length of the quay was crowded. The gradual approach of the schuyts with their yellow sails glittering in the sun, and their progress up the river in a line one after the other, were very striking spectacles. . . .

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* A low open carriage, of very simple construction and humble appearance, commonly used by the inhabitants of Yarmouth, as peculiarly adapted to their narrow lanes called *Rows*.

"But how I long to be with you, 'To quaff the pendent vintage as it grows;' to see a gay people in their gayest mood, and lead the dance with a sun burnt Champenoise on the green turf! Here, different employ! we are fitting out fishing-boats, preparing nets and cordage, launching to sea, and hunting out for the mighty shoals of herrings in their annual migration. Already some are brought in, and carts loaded with them are now driving by. Here is industry, and here are the sources of wealth; but where are pleasure, and elegance and vivacity? If employments must give a tincture and flavour to those occupied in them, surely one would prefer the perfume of the grape to the stench of a herring."

The inspiring influence of his sister's letters, describing alternately the gay and the sublime scenes which opened to her on her journey, and rendered still more impressive, perhaps, by the contrast of his own situation, roused all his poetic talent, and produced soon after an epistle to her in verse, which well deserves to be quoted among the most pleasing records of the writer's mind:

To Mrs. Barbauld, at Geneva.

"From Yare's low banks, where through the marshy plain
He leads his scanty tribute to the main,
On sea-girt Albion's furthest Eastern bound
Where direful shoals extend their bulwark round,—
To thee I turn, my sister and my friend!
On thee from far the mental vision bend.
O'er land, o'er sea, freed Fancy speeds her flight,
Waves the light wing, and towers her airy height:
And now the chalky cliffs behind her fly,
And Gallia's realms in brilliant prospect lie;
Now rivers, plains, and woods and vales are cross'd,
And many a scene in gay confusion lost,
'Till 'mid Burgundian hills she joins her chase,
And social pleasure crowns the rapid race.

"Fair land! by nature deck'd, and graced by art,
Alike to cheer the eye and glad the heart,
Pour thy soft influence through Lætitia's breast,
And lull each swelling wave of care to rest;
Heal with sweet balm the wounds of pain and toil,
Bid anxious, busy years restore their spoil;
The spirits light, the vigorous soul infuse,
And, to requite thy gifts, bring back the Muse.

DR. JOHN AIKIN.

For sure that Muse, whose far-resounding strains
Ennobled Cyrnus' rocks and Mersey's plains,
Shall here with boldest touch awake the lyre,
Soar to new heights, and glow with brighter fire.
Methinks I hear the sweetly-warbled note
On Seine's meand'ring bosom gently float;
Suzon's rude vale repeats the charming voice,
And all around the vine-clad hills rejoice:

"Now all thy grots, Auxcelles! with music sound;
From crystal roofs and vaults the strains rebound:
Besançon's splendid towers the song partake,
And breezes waft it to the Leman lake.
Delightful lake! whose margin gay and green
Smiles in soft contrast to the rugged scene
Of stern brow'd Alps, where storms eternal roll,
How must thy varied charms entrance the soul!
With what high passions must thy prospect move
The heart that beats to liberty and love!
Around, fair Freedom builds her lofty throne,
And rocks and valour guard it for her own;
While deep within embowering shades conceal'd,
To none but Cupid's mystic band reveal'd,
Clarens! thy roofs ascend, with turrets crown'd,
And love and Julia fill th' enchanted ground.

"Such, my Lætitia, on thy ravish'd eyes
Bursts the bright scene, the vivid landscapes rise;
While from my sight the air-drawn pictures fade,
And Fancy's glass bedimm'd denies its aid;
The colours melt, the lines dissolve in space,
And cold realities usurp the place.

"What different scenes succeed!—a steril shore,
Long level plains, the restless ocean's roar,
The rattling car, the shipwright's sturdy toil,
The far-spread net, and heaps of finny spoil.
Keen Eurus here sweeps o'er th' unshelter'd land,
Shakes the strong dome, and whirls the loosen'd sand:
Fair Flora shrinks, the trees averted bend,
While their thin boughs a scanty shade extend:
And, for the flowering thicket's cheerful notes,
Here hungry sea-fowl stretch their clamorous throats.

"And yet, e'en here, the soul-directed sight,
Which nature's views in ev'ry form delight,
May catch, as o'er the brighten'd scene they gleam,
Grandeur's strong ray, or beauty's softer beam.
Frequent along the pebbly beach I pace,
And gaze intent on ocean's varying face.
Now from the main rolls in the swelling tide,
And waves on waves in long procession ride;
Gath'ring they come, till, gain'd the ridgy height,
No more the liquid mound sustains its weight;

It curls, it falls, it breaks with hideous roar,
And pours a foamy deluge on the shore.
From the bleak pole now driving tempests sweep,
Tear the light clouds, and vex the ruffled deep,
White o'er the shoals the spouting breakers rise,
And mix the waste of waters with the skies:
The anchoring vessels, stretch'd in long array,
Shake from their bounding sides the dashing spray;
Lab'ring they heave, the tighten'd cables strain,
And danger adds new horror to the main.
Then shifts the scene, as to the western gales
Delighted Commerce spreads her crowded sails.
A cluster'd group the distant fleets appear,
That scatt'ring breaks in varied figures near:
Now, all illumn'd by the kindling ray,
Swan-like, the stately vessel cuts her way;
The full-wing'd barks now meet, now swiftly pass,
And leave long traces in the liquid glass:
Light boats, all sail, athwart the current bound,
And dot with shining specks the surface round.
Nor with the day the sea-born splendours cease:
When evening lulls each ruder gale to peace,
The rising moon with silvery lustre gleams,
And shoots across the flood her quivering beams.
Or if deep gloom succeeds the sultry day,
On ocean's bosom native meteors play,
Flash from the wave, pursue the dipping oar,
And roll in flaming billows to the shore.

"'Tis thus, within this narrow nook confined,
I strive to feed with change th' insatiate mind,
But surer aid the Muses' stores impart,
With each new world of science and of art;
And, more than all, the joys of sacred home
Forbid my heart to pant, my feet to roam.
Yet one dear wish still struggles in my breast,
And points one darling object unpossess'd:
How many years have whirl'd their rapid course
Since we, sole streamlets from one honour'd source,
In fond affection as in blood allied,
Have wander'd devious from each other's side;
Allowed to catch alone some transient view,
Scarce long enough to think the vision true;
O then, while yet some zest of life remains,
While transport yet can swell the beating veins,
While sweet remembrance keeps her wonted seat,
And fancy still retains some genial heat,
When evening bids each busy task be o'er,
Once let us meet again,—to part no more!

A year of experiment was sufficient entirely to convince Dr. Aikin of the correctness of his first judgment concerning the probable unproductiveness of Yarmouth to him, as a medical station; and he was now fully bent on a change of residence. The choice of a new scene of action still however remained matter of anxious deliberation, till his doubts were ended in the manner related in the following letter to Dr. Haygarth, dated December, 1785.

"You will, I doubt not, my dear friend, be pleased to hear, that after my discussion and rejection of so many schemes for a change in my situation, I have at length come to a determination. The decision is a bold one, but I hope it is well weighed, and that it will appear to my friends as well as myself, not too hazardous. London is the place, after all, where I am to make my efforts. The prize is worthy of a contest, though I confess it would be little consolation to have it said, in case of a failure, 'magnis tamen excidit ausis.'

"I took a journey, about three weeks since, to Bedfordshire and St. Albans, to reconnoitre there, where I have connections; but I could find little encouragement. Thence I went to London and saw all my relations and friends, and, to my surprise, found them almost unanimous in advising me to venture at the metropolis, with such assurances of support, or confidence of presage, that all my fears and reluctancies at length gave way, and I left town with a resolution to prepare as soon as possible for my settlement there......In the line I am to follow, I do not think it will be of so much consequence to *make a noise*, as assiduously to cultivate all private friendships and acquaintances, and to get introduced as much as possible to families. Yet if an hospital, or a partnership in lecturing should be easily procurable, I shall certainly offer myself. In short, it is my resolution to be active and pushing, and even to force my natural disposition, if it stands in my way."

With these prospects and resolutions, he removed to London, and fixed himself with his family in the city; where the chief strength of his connections at that time lay. The fame of his literary productions had preceded him in many quarters; and as it may safely be affirmed in his case, that the *man* never disappointed the warmest admirers of the *author*, he found himself rapidly making his way in society, and beginning to unite the general suffrage to the cordial attachment of relations and family friends. With so much in his reception to flatter self-applause, and minister food to ambition, added to the common attractions of the metropolis for every inquiring mind and active spirit,—his relinquishment of his new situation within the space of four months, was a sacrifice of the brilliant to the solid,—or, to speak more truly, of immediate personal gratification, to the security and welfare of his family, which must be contemplated, by the most indifferent, with respect and approbation, and can never be recalled by the immediate objects of so generous a self devotion, without the liveliest emotions of gratitude. An event of the most unexpected nature was the source of this total change of plan :-This was the sudden dereliction of his situation by the physician who had remained at Yarmouth in full possession of the field. The result is thus communicated by Dr. Aikin, in a letter to his sister.

........"Immediately on this event, an invitation to me was drawn up, and signed by almost every body of all parties in the town, promising their utmost support in case I would return. Such a testimory of respect and attachment could not but move me; and the idea of immediately coming into the undisturbed possession of a decent competence, instead of the expensive and precarious struggle for distant success in London, operated very powerfully in a prudential view. For though I have met with many civilities here, and formed many agreeable acquaintances, yet, on the whole, I am more sensible than before of the length of time and effort necessary to make ones way in town. I laid the whole state of the case before my nearest friends and relations, and we endeavoured to make some calculation of a moderate certainty, compared to a splendid uncertainty. But all seemed to agree, that prudence could not hesitate in determining for the former.

"Inclination pleaded most strongly, with both my wife and myself, to stay amidst our dearest connections, and enjoy that sweet society which would soon be probably augmented by so dear an addition as yourselves. But the good of our family was a consideration not to be surmounted, and we could not make ourselves easy in hazarding their advantage for the sake of our own enjoyment. I was compelled, therefore, to accept the flattering offer made me; and as the case would not admit delay, I wrote immediately, and am to go down to take possession of my post to-morrow. . . . . .

"To attempt to describe the crowd of mixed emotions which agitate me on this occasion, would only aggravate whatever there is in them distressing and unpleasant. I see at once all that I lose,—the great, the lasting sacrifices that I make. My compensation is to be that state of tranquillity and security which it requires time and leisure to enjoy completely, and the operation of which, though great in the scale of life, is not to be represented in striking colours. All that remains for us is, to make the best advantage of every opportunity of happiness that lies in our way, and acquiesce as well as we can in every privation and disappointment."

That every sacrifice of lower motives of action to higher,—of the selfish principle to the social,—is immediately and certainly rewarded by the internal emotions of the individual, and in most cases by the concurring sentiments of others, is the great truth which cannot be too often repeated, or too variously illustrated; and it will, on this account, be useful, as well as satisfactory, to contemplate the state of mind exhibited in the following passages of a letter to Dr. Haygarth:

"Your very kind letter, and the decided approbation you bestow on my late removal, give me peculiar satisfaction. Indeed, all my friends unite in telling me I have determined wisely, according to a collected view of all the circumstances:—even my friend Mr. B—y, who, with yourself, was always a stimulator of my ambition, is compelled to the same conclusion.

"I have now been here a month, and find my situation, with regard to the respect with which I am treated, and the emoluments I enjoy, fully equal to my expectations. I also feel much pleasure in becoming again a man of business, filling a post of some use and consequence in society. I have just purchased a very good and pleasant house, which every body says is an extremely cheap bargain. My wife and family are as yet in town or elsewhere, and I am in lodgings. But I hope soon to re-commence that domestic life, which, to persons so happy in their connections as you and I are, is the only scene of real felicity.

"I lately made an augmentation of my medical library, at a cheap rate, at a sale. Sauvages, Lieutaud, and some other good books, are among them; and I frequently consult them by way of comparing what I meet with in practice, with description. I keep a case book, upon the plan of yours, and find it very useful and improving. I have already entered above a score all in Latin.

"Mr. Howard is now in Italy, from whence he means to go to

Sicily, and thence to Constantinople. If he escapes the plague or a prison, I shall think him indeed heaven protected.

"I recollect nothing else at present to communicate; yet if we could have a Frodsham meeting again, how much should we both find to say! But peace, ye vain regrets,—let me not dwell upon things that were, and 'were most dear to me!'"

Another letter, written to the same friend some months afterwards, preserves a similar tone of habitual contentedness, and also affords some interesting notices of the pursuits and sentiments of the writer.

"How many things have I to say to you, which cannot come within the compass of a letter! O Frodsham, Frodsham! but regret is vain, and even unreasonable, when, having had before us the advantages and disadvantages of various situations, we have made our choice, and have reason, on the whole, to be satisfied with it. I am now, as I think, perfectly settled; and though I have little reason to think either that my gains will be large, or my reputation extended, I know not where, upon the whole, I could be better. My London expedition is like a strange dream to my mind, and in a few years I shall scarcely be able to consider it as a reality. I should now and then feel a little disappointment at the loss of the brilliant and lively prospects it afforded, did I not immediately call to mind the circumstances of midwifery, rivalship,—intrigue,—meanness,—hazard,—and family sickness, which must have accompanied them; and then I perfectly acquiesce in the change. I now live in a good house of my own, with a cheerful family about me, amidst agreeable acquaintance, in a respectable rank of life; and want nothing but a little more business, both by way of employment, and for profit. But I can keep my head above water; and perhaps in time my fame may extend to a dozen miles' distance; and then I shall be some body in the world. To speak without jesting, I have a tolerable range southwards in Suffolk, and have already been called in by all the surgeons of Beccles, a good market town fourteen miles off.

"You ask me what I am doing in the literary way. Truly, nothing but amusing myself, and that is all I intend doing hereafter; for really one has such a terrible line of critics to run the gauntlet through, that I shall scarcely have courage again to face them. I employ some of my leisure in practising to write medical Latin, for no other particular purpose than that of keeping my cases with some elegance. My way is, to translate pretty literally a page or two of Celsus, or some other good writer, and the next day render it back into Latin and compare the two. I now and then scribble a few verses, and always have some entertaining book in reading, which prevents time from hanging heavy upon my hands. As for philosophy, chemistry, and the other studies which require close attention and much application, I think in my present situation I do most wisely in letting them slip by. What are they now to me, further than an amusement? and I own I find little amusement in them. The *musæ elegantiores* were always more to my taste.

"But *ipse quid audes?* You say nothing of your own pursuits, nor in what way you are now consulting the public good; for as every man has his amusement, that was always yours. Do you keep the small pox at bay yet? Do you defy infectious fevers? Are all the youth of Chester instructed and humanised under your plans? What are your favourite books? Have you read Cowper's Task? If you have, you will join with him in saying 'England, with all thy faults I love thee still, my country!' The ardour of his soul will in some degree correspond with yours, and I doubt not that you will be struck with his poetic beauties, which I think in some respects almost unequalled. Yes, I do think upon the whole ours a very tolerable country, nor would I quit it even to be a Dutch or American republican.

"With respect to my friends the Dutch, I own I admire their spirit, and augur well as to the issue of the patriotic cause. Why need a republic tie themselves to the control of hereditary fools, contrary to the fundamental principles of their state? There will be no civil war, I dare say; and foreign powers will prevent each other from hurting them. You have guessed whence the account of the Dutch visit to this place proceeded. I believe I shall frequently send a trifle to the Gentleman's Magazine, and since that, have inserted there an account of our maritime plants, and an Apology for Literary Physicians."

Various were the resources which occurred to Dr. Aikin for filling up his intervals of leisure during the year 1787. At the earnest request of his friend Dr. Percival, he received his eldest son into his house, for the purpose of initiation in medical studies, and this connection subsisted with mutual satisfaction for more than a year; though the preference of the pupil for the clerical profession, proved in the end insuperable. Another source of employment was supplied to him by the return of Mr. Howard from the long and perilous journey referred to in a previous extract. Previously to his departure, this gentleman had been furnished at his own request, by Dr. Jebb and my father, with a set of queries relative to the plague, to be addressed to the medical practitioners of such ports of the Levant as he proposed to visit: and on his return, he put the answers to these queries, with such other documonts respecting this dreadful malady as he had been able to procure, into the hands of my father, who compiled from them all the medical part of Mr. Howard's work on Lazarettos. Several of these documents were in Italian; and it was for the purpose of understanding them that he taught himself that language; the poets, historians and biographers of which afterwards proved to him an invaluable source of instruction and delight. Some of his earliest impressions respecting the Italian poets are thus communicated to Mrs. Barbauld.

"....You may imagine that amid all these engagements, Italian has not been much pursued. I have however read through the *Aminta;* and with more pleasure than I could have supposed an *idle love tale* could now have given me. There are, indeed, some charming passages, and I could easily trace some of our most admired poets as imitators of this original. Did you never feel the pleasure one experiences in meeting with a passage in its right place already familiar to us in quotation? I felt this highly on finding in the Aminta those beautiful lines quoted in the *Nouvelle Heloise,* "Congiunti eran l'alberghi," &c. I have also read the *Siroe* of Metastasio, the plot of which is, to be sure, gloriously absurd. His lovers are so pitifully tame and humble, and his heroines such insolent viragoes, that I feel very little interest in their affairs."

During the year 1788, he was employed in the composition of his popular little work, England Delineated. He described it to be his intention here "to sketch a bold and strong outline, whereby the *discriminating character* of each county may be impressed on the mind;" and I may be permitted to remark, that there were few things in which his peculiar talent shone more than in this kind of spirited sketching. The uncommon clearness both of his ideas and his style, enabled him, with a few strokes, to convey images at once distinct and lively; and his works for young people abound with these *bird's-eye views* of various departments of knowledge, which he thought it advantageous early to spread before them, that they might be enabled immediately to arrange, with an approach at least to accuracy, such ideas of detail as they should afterwards accumulate. Few of his works were executed with more pleasure to himself than this: geographical and topographical pursuits were always congenial to his taste; in its least attractive forms, knowledge of this kind was welcome to his mind, and when embellished by the charms of eloquence and poetry, a source of high delight. I have often witnessed the admiration with which he perused the description of the site of Constantinople, and the other geographical delineations traced by the masterly hand of Gibbon; and the enthusiasm with which he dwelt upon the splendid *panoramas* of the ancient world exhibited by Milton in his Paradise Lost, and Paradise Regained.*

Another occupation of the leisure of this year, but rather of a professional than literary nature, was the preparation of another new edition of Lewis's Materia Medica, with all the alterations of the last London Pharmacopœia, and two or three new articles. He was likewise engaged in initiating in the elements of medicine, the second son of Dr. Percival, who had taken his brother's place under his tuition, and entered upon professional studies with such ardour and success as to excite high hopes of future eminence, which were unhappily frustrated by an untimely death. About the same time, various circumstances conspired to lead him on in a train of thought, which afterwards broke forth in such a variety of forms in his writings, and influenced his conduct in so many important particulars, that it will be proper to trace its origin and progress. He had early learned from the precepts and example, doubtless, of his excellent father, to regard the different degrees of moral worth and intellectual proficiency as the only really important distinctions among mankind. In consequence of this estimate of things, no man was ever, not in theory alone, but in practice, less of a respecter of persons; for while he disdained to pay court to the ignorant and the profligate, whatever their rank and fortune, or their ability to promote his own worldly interests, he always discovered a benevolent willingness to enter into conversation with persons in the humblest stations, if possessed of decent manners, and of the disposition to seek, or the power to communicate, useful knowledge, of whatever kind. As a medical man, his intercourse with the lower classes was constant and extensive;—for his gratuitous assistance was always at their free disposal,—and in the situations in which he saw them, he often found himself called upon to pay homage to their social and domestic virtues, while he compassionated their sufferings and deplored their hardships. The combined result, then, of his principles and his experience was, a remarkable degree of *fellow feeling with the poor*, a desire to raise them in their own estimation and that of others to what he regarded as their due level, and a fixed opinion that the extreme inequality of conditions was both an evil and an injustice of the greatest magnitude, and one which it was the duty of a government calling itself free and enlightened, to take measures for lessening. The state of the poor in Norfolk at the period of his removal thither, was peculiarly calculated to give force to these ideas. A long and progressive diminution of demand for the woollen fabrics of Norwich, had gradually impoverished the labouring classes throughout a considerable district; and the alarming increase of poor's-rates consequent upon their inability to find regular employment, had suggested various plans for the cheaper maintenance of persons who had become chargeable to their parish. Among these was the erection of houses of industry, two or three of which had been established on what was regarded as an improved plan, and were zealously patronised by the county magistrates. A visit to one of these, made under the conduct of a zealous friend and advocate of the design, had the unexpected effect of suggesting to Dr. Aikin the following remarks, which first appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for January, 1788, and afterwards received the distinction, highly valued by their author, of being re-printed by Mr. Howard, at his own expense, in a separate form for general circulation:

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* Besides the merit of the plan and general execution, England Delineated had that of bringing before the public a very considerable quantity of new and accurate information concerning particular towns and districts, obtained from many respectable correspondents to whom diligent application was made by the author. This work received considerable accessions in several successive editions; and a new modification of the work, comprising many fresh heads of information, was published in one closely printed octavo volume, under the title of England Described; Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1819.

"At a time when so many new schemes are in agitation for the better management of the poor, while objections are raised against them all, and yet all acknowledge that some alterations and improvements are necessary, I beg to be indulged with the insertion of a few observations on two points which ought to be considered previously to the establishment of any new mode; and a proper attention to which might decide the preference due to one above another. These points are, the RIGHTS OF THE POOR, and the COMFORTS OF THE POOR.

"With respect to the Poor Man's RIGHTS, I presume they are *naturally* the same with the rich man's. Set the prince and the basket maker together upon a desolate island, and it is certain the birth of the former will not be so good a plea for superiority as the skill of the latter. But in a *state of society,* the *rights* of the poor man must be estimated by the *sacrifices* he has made (or has acquiesced in) for the benefit of that society. Now these are great indeed. He has resigned to the landlord all his share of the ground which his own hands cultivate; not reserving to himself so much as will bury him. He has lent to the merchant and manufacturer the use of his limbs, as an engine to procure them wealth, at a rate much below their real value. He has relinquished, to those who are called his betters, all claim to power, rank, title, and respect, and is content to swell the pomp of state by the contrast he exhibits of meanness opposed to grandeur; without which comparative relation neither of them would exist. What then, in such an unequal distribution, is left him? Surely the security, at least, that his condition shall not become still worse (unless by his own fault); and that, like the bee which resigns her treasures to man, he may remain unmolested in his hive, and be fed with a portion of that honey which he collects for his masters. If this be denied him, will he not be apt to call for a fresh division of the common property, and say, "Give me the portion of good things which falleth unto me?" Heavy as is the burden of poor rates, I suppose the opulent do not wish for such a liquidation of the account. I conceive it, therefore, to be the *right* of the poor man, *at all events,* and notwithstanding the burdens which may seem to press upon the rich, to be secured in the continuance of the humble enjoyments belonging to his station A *willingness to labour* is all the return that can be required of him. If, either by age or sickness, he is rendered incapable of labour, or if no work can be found for him, he may still demand his usual scanty share from those, who, without labouring any more than he, are supplied with abundance out of the *general stock.* It is not enough, then, to provide for the poor, by keeping their souls and bodies together in the cheapest manner possible; they are to be maintained in the possession of their *comforts*.

"What are the poor man's COMFORTS? They lie in a small compass; and therefore ought to be the more sacred.

"One great source of comfort to the poor man is his *wife and children,* if he be not overburdened by them. Despised and insignificant as he may be abroad, he is of some consequence at home. He finds there those who care for him, who obey him; to whom he may say, Go, and they go; and Come, and they come. He is not without a sense of the charities of father, son, and husband; and, when sick and dispirited, it is the greatest of his comforts to be attended upon by those who love and regard him. There may be some danger of sinking even a stout heart by the forcible separation of husband and wife, parents and children, in times of sickness and distress; nor would one surely wish them to be entirely indifferent to each other.

"The poor man, poor as he is, loves to cherish some idea of *property*;—to say, *my* house, *my* garden, *my* furniture; and when his whole domestic establishment goes to wreck on a removal to a workhouse, he is weak enough to grieve a little at the loss of things that by use were become precious to him. He does not like to consider himself only as a lodger or a guest, though in a much finer mansion than his own;—he does not wear with satisfaction clothes, though warm, that belong to the *community,* and not to *himself.* And are not these respectable prejudices?

"The poor man is comforted under his poverty by thinking himself *free.* This freedom of his, God knows, is circumscribed by such a number of imperious necessities, that it is reduced to little in effect; but he pleases himself in imagining that he possesses it; and that he may go out or come in, work or play, at his own option. He likes to be the judge of his own wants, and to provide for them after his own manner. He even chooses to have the determination whether he shall boil or bake his Sunday's dinner. Then he cannot be easy under *confinement,* abhors the thought of being under *lock and key,* and thinks no man deserves a *prison* who has not committed a crime. To be a cypher in the state, and therefore a *slave,* according to the idea of some political theorists, does not hurt him at all; but he has a mortal dislike to arbitrary rule exercised over all his actions. And is it in England that one would wish to extinguish these feelings!

"Lastly, the poor man places some of his comfort (often, it must be acknowledged, too much of it) in *social* and *convivial enjoyments.* The bare mention of these, in a poor man, strikes many with the idea of great criminalty, and the appellations of drunken and idle are liberally bestowed with great indignation. To get drunk, and squander at an ale-house what ought to maintain his family, is undoubtedly very wrong in a poor man; but that, after a hard day's or week's labour, he should love to relax a little in that place which affords "an hour's importance to the poor man's heart," is surely so natural that it cannot deserve much censure. The evening chat at a neighbour's door, the Sunday's church yard politics, the holiday festivities, the rustic games, and athletic exercises, are as welcome to the labourer, as the Opera-house and Almack's to the lord; and who will say, that the pleasures of the former are not as well earned as those of the latter? Without these sweeteners, what would be the bitter cup of a poor man's life! What *is* the life of him who is compelled to sustain a tasteless and melancholy being within the barred precincts of a workhouse, where the names of freedom, property, and cheerfulness, are unknown?"

Similar views are further opened in a letter addressed to a medical friend, in the autumn of the same year.

"The state of the poor has indeed considerably occupied my thoughts, and I heartily wish their situation was bettered, not only by the exertions of private charity, but by a spirit of justice, and a due sense of the natural equality of mankind. Their state is, indeed, so bad in many respects, that considering they form the great bulk of the community, it ought, I think, to diminish our boasts of a perfect form of constitution, and incite us to some extensive and effectual reform. As I have no idea of the value of human life, independent of its happiness, I am ready to acknowledge that the preservation of the lives of the infant poor is not, of itself, any great object with me; and I am convinced that till they are *themselves* interested in the safety of their children, no public institution for preventing the spread of the small pox or other contagious diseases among them will avail. I always thought it a kind of solecism to *pay* people for taking care of *their own children;* and in the present state of things I think it quite enough to offer them gratuitously the best means of preservation. It hurts me to have the poor treated as absolutely irrational animals. Give them rights and comforts,—make life an object of desire to them,—and then they will take care of themselves."

The bearing of these sentiments on his political ideas is made evident by a subsequent passage in the same letter.

"I did not expect my political ode* would altogether please you; but I value the frankness with which you tell me it does not. I cannot, however, allow that its sentiments go to the destruction of our constitution, which surely, inasmuch as it is a *free* one, comes under my definition of a *commonwealth*, viz. one in which the basis of the legislative power is laid in the body of the people. I only wish strongly to inculcate this leading idea, the fair conclusion from which I take to be, that the popular part of our constitution is the only essential part, and that the rest is valuable solely as it secures the safe and temperate exercise of this. To this state of political opinion, I have been gradually led by following, as fairly as I was able, and in opposition to former prejudices, a few simple principles; and nothing but a train of still more conclusive reasoning will probably induce me to change. It is, however, one of those subjects on which I can very well agree to differ with my friends."

It was in this state of his feelings, that the French revolution broke upon the world; and it will not appear wonderful that he should have been found in the number of its warm admirers, when it is recollected that its commencements were universally hailed by the friends of popular rights, in this and other countries, as the auspicious dawn of a new era of light and happiness.

But, it is well known that, even from the beginning, long before its progress was stained with blood and horrors, this great event was viewed with extreme jealousy by a majority of the higher classes in England, and especially by the established clergy; and that in most of our commercial towns, which have always been the strong holds of the protestant dissenters, and in corporate towns especially, the aristocratic and democratic parties, as they were then called, nearly coincided with the distinction of churchmen and dissenters. This division was rendered more exact, and the feelings which attended it doubly acrimonious, by the proceedings relative to the repeal of the corporation and test acts, which happened to coincide in time with the promulgation of the new constitution of France. When, in March, 1790, the dissenters found the abolition of this invidious law, which had nearly been carried in a former session, finally rejected by the votes of an overwhelming majority of the House of Commons, they were stung with a keen sense of the injustice of their country; and the best pens among them were sharpened for an appeal to public opinion,—the only resource which was left them. Bound to the dissenters by the ties of birth, connections, and personal obligations, Dr. Aikin did not hesitate on this occasion to stand forth as their champion; and two strongly written pamphlets attested his zeal in the cause. These pieces were published anonymously, but without any precautions for the concealment of the writer from the inquiries of either friends or foes.

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* Ode to the Genius of a Commonwealth, afterwards published among his Poems.

In those days of party violence, no one whose situation was in any respect a dependent one, was permitted to take the weaker side with impunity; nor was it long before Dr. Aikin was made to bear the penalty of his conscientious and disinterested efforts. Of the clergy resident in and near Yarmouth, whose literary acquirements and polished manners had hitherto rendered them his most congenial and agreeable associates, one alone had the courage and the liberality to stand by him without wavering in this season of trial. The members of the corporation and the high party generally, though not without some honourable exceptions, were pleased to consider themselves as absolved, *by circumstances*, from the engagement to support him, into which they had voluntarily entered on his coming to Yarmouth; and after studying to make him feel in various modes the weight of their displeasure, they entered into secret machinations for inviting another physician to take up his abode among them.

Meanwhile he continued to bear his head erect, as a man conscious of none but worthy motives, and prepared to stand to the consequences of his actions without shrinking;—but his natural disposition was so averse to turbulence and strife, that he could not see himself engaged, however innocently, in a conflict of this nature, without experiencing the most uneasy emotions; and he privately resolved, if the storm did not soon blow over, to yield to its fury and fly to the shelter of some friendly port.

The following poetical epistle, addressed to one of the dearest of his friends, expresses with great truth and feeling the fluctuations of his mind at this period, on contemplating the doubtful futurity which lay before him:

EPISTLE TO THE REV. W. ENFIELD, L. L. D.

ON PERUSING IN MANUSCRIPT HIS ABRIDGEMENT OF BRUCKER'S HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY.

Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare atque viam palantes quærere vitæ.—LUCRET.

"O Friend, to whose clear sight the mystic roll
Of wisdom lies display'd, where spreading wide
From India's, Egypt's, or Chaldea's root,
Thro' fertile Grecian branches, to the boughs
And twigs innumerous of a later growth,
The Tree of Knowledge stands, opake and full,
(I ween, not fruitless, like the shady elm
Of Orcus, where each leaf conceal'd a dream,)
Suspend thy toil severe, and deign awhile
On me, thy old companion, long belov'd,
Much favour'd, to bestow the precious boon
Of open converse, such as friendship loves
And freedom dictates. Many a school-drawn knot,
Tough web of sophistry, and tangled skein
Of metaphysic, by thy skilful hand
I see unravell'd, and with thee can soar,
Borne by the puffy, gas-inflated ball
Of speculation, to those fields of air
Where elements are bred and system's nurs'd.
But, for such subtle regions all too gross,
I gravitate to earth, and rather love
By clear Ilissus, or the shady groves
Of Tusculum, or Tibur's still retreats,
To court the placid power of *moral truth.*
Come, then, my friend, whose pure benignant breast
Is wisdom's best interpreter, O come,
And teach me *how to live;* for, sure, 'tis time,
When from the traveller's gaze the westering sun
Posts down the sky, 'tis time his course were fix'd.

"What, then, is man's chief bliss?—to lift the soul,
By lonely contemplation, to the source
Of good and fair, with Reason's essence pure
To feed the thought; and on the trivial scene
Of sublunary things look down unmov'd,
Self-honour'd, self-dependent—or to call
Each potent energy to active use,
And urge the flying moments with the weight
Of strong exertion, pressing ardent on
To some bright point of distance,—or to steal

With loitering foot along the vale obscure,
And pluck gay flowers, and dally with the time
In careless sport, and song, and converse sweet,
Delightful interchange!—or, plodding on,
With rule in hand, with grave and measur'd step,
To pace the level, line-drawn avenue,
Where business, meals, and sleep, in order due,
Like shrubs and statues in a Dutchman's walk,
Succeed unvaried? Say, in which of these,
The paths of human life, her fairy tread
Has Happiness imprinted? Shall we try,
By beating wide the ground, to catch a glimpse
Of the still-flying phantom; or pursue
With heedful diligence one chosen track?
For me, whom Fate has destin'd to the round
Of sober business, and as sober joys;
Whose roving wing is clipt; whose eager eye,
Agaze for distant wonders, must contract
Its narrowed focus to a map and book;
Who, for the vivid flash of living wit
And voice-clad eloquence, must court the beams
That shine in faint reflection from the page;
How shall I best preserve the genial flame
Alive within my breast? How trim the lamp
And clear from gathering dregs and vapours dim?
Soon, soon, the brief delights of sense must fail;
And buoyant spirits, from the rapid tide
Of youthful blood evolv'd, wax tame and dull.
What then shall save me from the palsying grasp
Of cold Indifference, leagued with sick Disgust,
Slack Listlessness, and sullen Melancholy!
Terrific group! Will poring o'er the leaves
Of sage Philosophy, with elbow chair,
Fire side, and winking taper, chase away
These black intruders? Ah! too well I know,
Already know, how hang the heavy hours
Of studious indolence that only seeks
In thoughts of other men to lose its own.
Then shall I seize the quill? screw high each chord
That vibrates in the brain; dilate the breast
With mighty heavings; rouse the throbbing heart
With keen emotions; touch with noble fire,
And pour the glowing torrrent on the page?
Or, arm'd with patient industry, lead on
To slow maturity some fair design,
The child of use and knowledge, which may stand
A monument for ages? such as thine,
Where learning, sense, and lucid order, clad
In clear expression, frame a perfect whole.
Or rather, pens and books thrown far aside,
Relume Ambition's fire, with desperate plunge
Rush in the crowd, and elbowing on my way

Thro' friends, thro' foes, and fierce Contention's din,
Catch at some gilded prize, some meteor gay,
And, having touch'd it—drop!

"Thus void of certain aim, not straying wide,
Perplex'd, not lost, I take my dubious way.
And wilt not thou a friendly arm extend
To point my footsteps, and with cheering voice
Exhort to steadfast march and bold advance?
Long, in the prime of manhood, side by side
We ran, and joy'd to give the mutual hand
In paths obscure and rugged:—sever'd now
I miss the dear companion of my road,
And wander lonely. Yet, what Fate allows,
Let me not want;—the frequent words of love,
The prudent counsel, admonition kind,
And all the free o'erflowings of the soul,
In letter'd intercourse;—and, sometimes, too,
More valu'd, as more rare, the *Friend entire.*"

Next to the endearments of domestic affection, which my father ever regarded as the best sweeteners of human life, he continued to prize the resources offered by letters; and in the midst of troubles and anxieties which would have left the majority of men but few spare thoughts at their disposal, he found in himself energy to plan and execute for the public more than one literary labour. The first of these, indeed, sprung from an imperious sense of duty towards the memory of a man whom he revered perhaps beyond all others. In the summer of 1789, almost immediately after the completion of the work on Lazarettos, in the composition of which Dr. Aikin has assisted him, the excellent Mr. Howard, whose sense of public duty was not to be satisfied with the inconveniences, toils, and perils which he had already confronted in the cause of humanity, set out on a new mission, which he proposed to render longer than any of his previous ones; for besides re-visiting Turkey, Russia, and some other countries, it was his intention to extend his tour into the East. He passed through Holland and the north of Germany to Petersburgh, thence to Moscow, and thence to Cherson in the Crimea, where a fever, caught in the exercise of some of his acts of benevolence, terminated his high career on January 20th, 1790. When he perceived his end approaching, Mr. Howard delivered his memorandums of the journey in which he was then engaged to the servant who attended him, with a written request that they might be fitted for publication by Dr. Price and Dr.

Aikin. The infirm state of health into which Dr. Price had fallen, caused the task to devolve wholly on my father; who, after he obtained possession of the papers from the executors, which was not done without considerable delay and difficulty, lost no time in preparing from them a narrative which was printed as an appendix to the work on Lazarettos.

But this effort was far from fulfilling his earnest desire of doing honour and justice to the memory of so revered and lamented a friend, and so distinguished an ornament not only of his age and country, but of human nature itself. The extraordinary exertions of Mr. Howard had fixed the wonder and admiration of all the countries which he had visited in the performance of his beneficent mission; and in many of these he had not only received from the highest authorities strong testimonies of personal respect and deference, but, what he valued much more, his opinions had been listened to, his plans and suggestions adopted, and extensive benefit had resulted to the unfortunate objects of his care and protection. At home, his evidence on the subject of prisons had been heard with deep attention by the House of Commons, which had voted him its thanks for his philanthropic exertions, and passed certain acts for the purpose of giving effect to his plans of reform, especially one for the erection of penitentiary houses, under the inspection of three supervisors, of whom he was named the first. But virtue so exalted in its quality, so singular in its mode of operation, and, above all, so conspicuous and so successful, could not be expected to escape the open hostility of selfishness and corruption, the covert insinuations of envy and detraction, or the misrepresentations of vulgar credulity; and no sooner was it known that he was finally removed from the scene, than a thousand absurd or malevolent reports which had hitherto circulated in conversation alone, found their way into magazines and newspapers, and perplexed or prejudiced the public judgment. It was important to rescue the memory of such a man from injury by a just statement of his actions and motives; and with respect to his public life and services, no one could be accounted better qualified to give such a statement, than one who had been selected by himself to assist in the composition of his works, and had enjoyed during many years the benefit of so much confidential discourse with him on his favourite objects. Accordingly, Dr. Aikin was strongly urged both by Mr. Howard's friends and his own, to undertake the office of his biographer, and their entreaties were powerfully seconded by the promptings of own mind. But the unaccountable hostility to this excellent person's memory exhibited by his nearest kinsman, who was his heir and one of his executors, opposed obstacles to the obtainment of proper materials for a history of the earlier and more private part of his life, which it appeared difficult to overcome; especially as Dr. Aikin's place of residence cut him off from opportunities of personal intercourse with the persons best informed in these particulars. At length however these difficulties were overcome by the zealous assistance of Mr. Howard's real friends, and in 1792 Dr. Aikin published, in a small octavo volume, "*A View of the Character and Public Services of the late John Howard, Esq. L L. D. F. R. S.*" This work comprises a full account of the events of Mr. Howard's life, of the origin and progress of his inquiries into the state of prisons, hospitals, and lazarettos; and of his travels in pursuit of his peculiar objects; interspersed with a copious analysis of his various publications. It concludes with a view of his character interspersed with illustrative anecdotes, somewhat in the style of those very agreeable pieces, the French *Eloges*. The strongly marked features of Mr. Howard's character, the extraordinary nature of his exertions, as well as the loftiness and purity of the principles and motives from which they sprung, and the deep feeling of his subject evinced by his biographer, all conspire to impart a deep and peculiar interest to this piece; and at the present day, when the subject of prison discipline, to which Mr. Howard was the first to draw the attention of the public, has called forth the benevolent efforts of so many fellow labourers in the cause of humanity, it seems likely to meet with more general acceptance than at the period of its publication.

A few months previously to the appearance of his life of Mr. Howard, Dr. Aikin printed a small volume of Poems, partly original, partly translations or imitations; none of these pieces are of considerable length, and their topics are very various. Those of the number are in all respects the best, which bear a reference to the actual circumstances of the writer, and express his own feelings and habitual trains of thought. Three of these, Horatian Philosophy, the Epistle to Mrs. Barbauld, and that to Dr. Enfield, have been inserted in the present memoir, under the years in which they were composed; and as the volume was never re-printed, I shall not scruple to avail myself somewhat further of its contents. The spirit of liberty is the pervading soul of a large proportion of the pieces; and the author, fully resolved to assert at all hazards the right of expressing the opinions which he had deliberately formed, ventured to prefix to the collection a *Counter remonstrance,* in answer to the prudential representations of friends, some passages of which are too characteristic of the author to be omitted:

* * * * * * *

"What want I in life to be bought at the price
Of courting proud folly or crouching to vice?
What is there should tempt me my freedom to barter,
Or a title to bate of an Englishman's charter?

Shall the mind that has drawn from the poet and sage
Some share of the nurture of ev'ry fair age,
Shrink back with false shame, or be dazzled with awe,
When weakness or prejudice lays down the law?

The first rights of nature when tyrants invade,
And freedom and justice aloud call for aid,
Unmov'd at the voice shall I stupidly stand
Or raise in the conflict a timorous hand?

O never must cold-hearted selfishness know
The noble delights of a generous glow,
The triumphant emotions that swell in the mind
When Reason and Truth gain the cause for mankind.

From the taste of these joys shall I meanly stoop down
And deaden my heart with the fear of a frown;
Weigh a sentiment's worth with the chance of a fee,
And throw in a scale,—'Why 'tis nothing to me?'

Is it nought to be lord of a liberal breast;
Is Truth a mere phantom, and Freedom a jest?"

* * * * * * *

The notices of his feelings and opinions contained in his private correspondence are entirely conformable to the manly sentiments which he thus courageously avowed to the world; and I shall here offer a few miscellaneous extracts from letters written in the years 1790 and 1791.

Many traces appear, in different parts of his works, of a desire to correct that blind admiration of which Dr. Johnson was for a considerable time the object, and the following judgment of his character is expressed to Mrs. Barbauld:

"He had not, indeed, a grain of the noble enthusiasm, the calm simplicity, the elevated purpose of a *great man*. His temper, habits, and system equally disqualified him from attaining that character. He was able with great accuracy to compare every literary and moral idea with the standards in his own mind, and to detect all false pretensions within his own compass. But there were heights in both to which he could not ascend. His *life* fell far short of his writings, and his faults and asperities were rather aggravated than softened by age."

That remarkable character Mr. Thomas Day, author of Sandford and Merton, calls forth these reflections:

"We have just read with pleasure Keir's Life of Mr. Day. Nothing deserves our admiration so much as these characters of *principle*. To be *amiable*, only requires good nature and indifference. Weakness has a better chance for it than virtue. What this age wants are, I am sure, examples of firmness and consistency; the friends of liberty particularly should say to themselves, *in ea tempora natus est, quibus firmare animum expediat constantibus exemplis*."

In a letter referring to Mrs. Barbauld's admirable poetical Epistle to Mr. Wilberforce, on his efforts for the abolition of the slave trade, which, for the time, had been frustrated of success; his ardent attachment to the great interests of society thus breaks forth:

"How little, how contemptible, do all the petty pursuits of philology appear, to the great concerns relative to man and his first interests which are transacting at this instant, before our eyes, and in which we are all invited to share! If Solon condemned the man who should remain neuter in the little party disputes of his country, what must be thought of him who through timidity or indifference refuses to take part in questions that are to decide the future condition perhaps of all mankind?"

Some of those readers whose memory contains the stores of not less than thirty years, will be able to call to mind, that among the measures adopted by the first zealous petitioners for the abolition of the slave trade, was that of persuading individuals to abstain, as a matter of conscience, from the consumption of sugar, and all other West Indian produce raised by the labour of slaves. To those who had studied mankind beyond the limits of small and peculiar sects, it was obvious, that this renunciation would never become sufficiently prevalent to produce any sensible effect on the demand for commodities of such general use;

and on this ground of inutility alone, Dr. Aikin refused for a time to concur in this point with the persons around him. His change of opinion is thus related to his sister:

"I am at length become a practical *antisacharist.* I could not continue to be the only person in the family who used a luxury which grew less and less *sweet* from the reflections mingled with it. I do not in this matter look to *effects.* They are in the hands of Providence, and I neither expect nor despair about them. I resign the use of sugar, merely on the conviction that, feeling as I do about the mode in which it is procured, I cannot justify the use of it to myself. It is a personal affair to me, and I neither feel a desire to make converts, nor trouble myself about consequences. The sacrifice I find less than I expected,—it is indeed almost too little to make to principle, with the idea of merit. I know not whether mere economy might not do as much. But with respect to the young people, and even *children,* who have entirely on their own accord resigned an indulgence important to them, I triumph and admire! Nothing is to be despaired of, if *many* of the rising generation are capable of such conduct."

The sentiments in his letters to Dr. Haygarth during this period are equally spirited; indeed it rather appears that his friend's avowed difference of opinion on public affairs lent additional force to his expressions; and even the professional topics which always occupied a considerable share of their correspondence, are occasionally enlivened with strokes of Opposition politics—as in the following instance; where the writer will also be found to have touched upon abuses which have since undergone much pointed remark from various quarters, and exercised the investigation of a parliamentary committee.

"The absurdity of the quarantine of persons in this country is inconceivable. Sir Charles Knowles, a naval officer here, tells me, that coming once from the Levant, he touched at Plymouth and there went on shore and called on several people: afterwards, on taking his ship to Portsmouth, he was obliged to perform quarantine. He says he once knew a gentleman called out of the Opera-house to go on board his ship for a quarantine. Such absurdities cannot exist among Hottentots and Cherokees. But we have as bad in various departments. Indeed, indeed, my friend, this wise and enlightened nation wants a thorough reform in almost all its institutions, and they are its worst enemies who *coax* it into an idea of its consummate good sense and knowledge. You are one of the greatest *innovators* I know, and I honour you for it."

In a letter dated in December, 1790, he thus pours for his whole mind to his friend:

"So, my good friend, though you make strokes at me about interference in politics, you could not refrain from indulging that triumph respecting Mr. Burke's performance which fills the breasts of nine-tenths of the people of England. Who would think this to have been the country of the Sidneys, Lockes, &c. when an oratorical effusion is able to bring about that wonderful conviction and uniformity of opinion which is only to be expected upon a *new* subject scarcely ever before written or thought about? But, in fact, the political feeling of many has never gone further than to compare all other forms of government with the British Constitution, and assign them their merits and demerits in exact proportions to their approach to, or departure from, that all-perfect model. I certainly do not agree with you in thinking that a folio is necessary in reply to Mr. Burke; for setting aside what in him is unanswerable, and what is not worth answering, and being content to *admire* that unequalled flow of wit and brilliancy which is no subject for an answer, his false principles and distorted reasonings will not I think require many pages to expose them at the bar of good sense. I assure you, however, that *I* have had no thoughts of engaging with this Achilles, nor do my present studies or occupations lie in the political way. I am, in fact, doing nothing but amusing myself, and a part of that amusement is the publication of a few poems, which I suppose will soon appear. There, indeed, you will see what I *think* upon politics, and how boldly I dare tell my thoughts. In short, *jacta est alea.* At my age it would be trifling not to have a *character*, and cowardly not to avow and stick to it. Nor do I think it will be much at the expense of that regard to my *family* which you justly think (at least in my condition) the first of duties. If I remain content to pace in the limited circle in which I now move, it is probable I may continue to do so notwithstanding a few political squabbles. But if ambition should ever lead me into a new field, my success must depend upon such connections and supports as such a conduct will not be unfavourable to. But, believe me, this is no consideration of mine. I feel a *pleasure* in acting a manly independent part which is superior to any thing increased opulence could give; and I know not why I should wish a different kind of happiness for my family than for myself. My dear friend, though we differ in many things, yet I am sure we agree in loving our families, and in valuing principles of honour and integrity. The account you give of your domestic happiness is highly pleasing to me. May it continually increase! I am glad, too, that your thoughts and labours in the prevention of the small pox are again to appear, in a new form. Any services I can do in this, or any thing else, are at your command. . . . Can you suggest any close, fagging employment for my pen in the medical way?"

Meanwhile his situation at Yarmouth was becoming daily more disagreeable to him, and in every respect less worth his keeping. On the other hand, rather encouraging answers had been returned to the inquiries which he had authorised some of his nearest connections to make respecting the probability of his medical success in London; and after making a hasty journey thither for the purpose of examining the ground with his own eyes, he finally resolved on removing with his family early in the year 1792. The last letter written by him to his friend from Yarmouth, thus explains his feelings and prospects at this important juncture of his history:

"It gives me great satisfaction, my dear friend, that you, as well as all my other friends and well wishers, approve the important step I am going to take. Though in my temper I am neither sanguine or ambitious, I cannot but look forward with some pleasing expectations to a change in situation which will make life more valuable to me, and enlarge the sphere of my activity in various ways. Indeed, even had I not been a victim to party bigotry in this place, a removal would have been on many accounts desirable, and principally on account of the want of stimulus, and indifference to every thing which was creeping on me. It was this, perhaps, which precipitated me into controversy by way of relief from insipidity; and if I have suffered in some respects from my meddling, I think it has done me good in others. Do not suppose, however, that I go to London on the plan of plunging again into party contests, or making myself the hero of a cause. Whatever violence may be imagined deducible from my principles, my temper, believe me, is as moderate as ever. The strong impulse is over, and I shall henceforth do little more than bestow my warm wishes on what I deliberately think the interest of truth and mankind. I have, it is true, felt somewhat too much on some of the late great events of the world; and if the fair fabric of French liberty is after all to sink in blood, and tyranny and priestcraft again to assume the sway, I shall scarcely be able to bear the disappointment with perfect tranquillity. But, on the whole, it is my resolution to attend chiefly to my own concerns, and become as selfish and bustling as my *best friends* can wish. So much for my sect of philosophy! Now to the state of my affairs.

"I have nothing now to keep me here but the want of a house in London; and in order to expedite this matter, I mean again to run to town in about a week, where I shall stay till I have suited myself, and then only come down again to bid farewel and wind up my little concerns. My situation in town I mean to fix in the *city*, where my friends chiefly reside, and if possible towards the Hackney side, as I shall have various connections there. I shall practise as a physician only. At present I have no thoughts of giving lectures, as that can only be done to advantage with a hospital. I mean to employ all my leisure in my *Medical Biography*, in which I am again seriously interested, and for which I can there easily procure every necessary aid. I have already completely analysed various works; among the rest all Willis's; and I am quite of your opinion, that a full view of the progress of medical doctrines and practice is the *most* (or rather the *only*) important part of my design. A few literary schemes besides may have their place. . . . . . .

"I do indeed rejoice that I shall be somewhat nearer you, and at the grand centre of attraction, which some time or other extends its influence to every body (who is *any body*) in the kingdom."

In pursuance of the plans here indicated, Dr. Aikin took a house in Broad Street Buildings, in which he assembled his family in the spring of 1792, and commenced his career in the capacity of a London physician. Many circumstances conspired to render the opening of this new scene of life auspicious and agreeable. The near and dear connections whom he had quitted with regret six years before, and to whom he seemed to be returning from a tedious exile, received him and his with open arms; and Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld, now settled at Hampstead, were added to the number. The common attraction of the metropolis had also brought within its sphere several old and valued friends from whom he had long been separated; especially

Dr. Priestley and Mr. Wakefield, who were at this time resident at Hackney and engaged as tutors in the new dissenting college there, which had been established as a successor to the Warrington one; and in which Dr. Aikin's eldest son was now a student. Many of the friends of civil and religious liberty, who regarded him as a kind of confessor in the cause, welcomed him with cordiality, and his literary character served him as a passport in other quarters. There was reason to hope under these circumstances that his professional success would ultimately correspond with his wishes; the characteristic moderation of which had undergone no change from his change of situation, as the first letter which he addressed to Dr. Haygarth from London abundantly proves.

"I have got access to a very capital medical library, particularly rich in English medical authors, Dr. Sims's. It will be my own fault if I do not find employment there for all my leisure, for a long time; and be assured that I find much more satisfaction in such employment than in any of the topics by which the world is at present agitated. Still, I know that even *that* is not what ought chiefly to engage me in the situation I now occupy, but rather the great and intricate science of pushing one's way in a crowd. Yet what man of forty-five can cast his part anew in life,—and after mediocrity and literary leisure have been my darling objects so long, how can I ever change them for their opposities? Believe me, not all the splendour I see daily passing before my eyes, has in the least impaired my relish for a book, a domestic fireside, and the society of two or three selected friends; and all my desires are limited to the ability of enjoying them with security, and transmitting similar blessings to my children."

His views and prospects, as well as the literary undertakings with which he occupied his leisure, are further explained in a letter to the same friend a few months afterwards.

"In answer to your inquiries about me, I am to acquaint you that my professional employment, like the fame of Mercellus, '*crescit occulto velut arbor ævo.*' It is, I think, silently creeping forwards, with little chance ever to break out into splendour, but I hope, with a reasonable prospect of answering my moderate expectations *in time.* It appears to me that in London, as every where else, it is a man's business to avail himself of his own *peculiar* advantages, and to push on in the way nature and fortune seem to point out to him in particular. Now, my situation here is that of a person not void of friends and family connections, of a certain standing and known character, and therefore without the need (as I am sure I am without the talent) of puffing and elbowing like a young unknown adventurer. Our old friend Dr. Fothergill used to say, that he got forwards by doing what business he had to do, as well as ever he could. This is the kind of policy that best suits me. To be attentive, obliging, discreet, and to take all proper opportunities of displaying such talents as I may possess fitted to inspire esteem, are the only modes that my temper will let me practise, and I believe the state of public opinion is not so bad that in the long run they will not answer. Meantime, my known engagements in medical study and writing answer the purpose of giving me professional reputation among my brethren; I take sufficient care to make known my pursuit of medical biography, and have had several books out of the college library, as well as from private collections. All these I fairly analyse, and am daily adding to my stores of this kind; for my plan is now as full as you would wish it, as to giving a view of the opinions and practice of our medical authors. With respect to acquaintances among the faculty, I have made several slight ones, but none intimate. My old master, Dr. Garthshore, takes a good deal of notice of me, and at his weekly *conversaziones* I have met with more medical and literary persons than any where else. I am no frequenter of coffee houses, those in the city being the resort chiefly of humdrum politicians; but I belong to a club or two of select men, and I take all opportunities of becoming acquainted with eminent persons in every line.

"I am engaged with a few literary persons in a plan of a monthly publication, the purpose of which is to give an account of all *memoirs* printed by the learned societies both at home and abroad. We mean to afford by it full information of every thing new that is going forward in science and the arts, and do not doubt, if we perform our task properly, of making it a very useful work. We shall publish our first number in January next. My share will be chiefly the medical and natural history departments.

"As to the horrible events that are now going on in the political world, what can I say, but that I feel them as acutely as you can do? But we live to little purpose, unless we accustom ourselves to look through *effects* to their *causes;* and as in this case I think the whole mischief imputable to the accursed spirit of military despotism, my resentment against tyranny is but the more inflamed on account of the discredit thrown by its means on the cause of liberty and mankind. 'Tis a strange world;—my hopes fail, but not my wishes."

Respecting the literary undertakings here referred to, the reader is already apprised that discouragements of various kinds intercepted the continuation of the *Medical Biography*. The periodical work appeared under the title of *Memoirs of Science and the Arts;* but was after a time discontinued, from causes of failure with which I am not acquainted.

The critical essay on the poems of Goldsmith, re-printed in the present collection, was composed in this year, and my father also produced, in conjunction with his sister, the first volume of *Evenings at Home*—the most popular, perhaps, of all his works, and one of the most meritorious;—for how can genius, knowledge, and virtue be occupied with greater certainty of producing good than in pouring their treasures upon the mind of youth?

The volumes of this work appeared successively during several subsequent years, and amounted at length to six; Mrs. Barbauld contributing in the whole about half a volume to the collection, and my father supplying the rest.

It is a miscellaneous collection of tales, fables, and dialogues, interspersed with some short pieces of verse; the subjects are extremely various, and there is no arrangement or classification of the pieces. With this apparent desultoriness, however, no work for the use of young people ever had more serious or more definite objects in view; and to an intelligent reader of mature age, its attentive perusal would disclose the whole theory and practice of the author, as far as education is concerned; besides affording notices of his opinions on many highly important topics; and conveying a correct and lively impression of his temper and feelings, and his manner of living and conversing with his children in the bosom of their home.

For the information and amusement of those happy children, indeed, many of the pieces were originally composed by him; and in one form or other they had received the substance of most of them;—for in the midst of all his studies and various occupations, he constantly discharged, in the most assiduous as well as engaging manner, the offices of parental instruction;—all his children were occasionally under his own tuition; but the two younger ones were educated entirely at home, by himself and their exemplary mother.

The whole of *Evenings at Home* may be regarded as a commentary upon his two favourite ideas—of teaching *things* rather than *words;* and of early presenting to the mind capacious and diversified views of the great empire of knowledge. The work contains a good deal of the natural history, both of animals and plants, not detailed in the dry mode of systematic compendiums, but animated and enriched with bold and striking sketches of the dwellings and manners of the living tribes, and of the general appearance and habits, and principal utilities of the vegetable families. Some elements of chemistry and mineralogy are taught on a similar plan, and much incidental information is conveyed on manufactures and the useful arts. Other pieces relate to *man*, in various views of his state and character. The tales and little dramas, which exhibit great fertility and happiness of invention, and in some instances a melting tenderness truly characteristic of the author's heart, have the usual purpose of such stories, of combining moral instruction with entertainment: but the morality which they inculcate is not that of children merely, but of men and of citizens; it is lofty, but not visionary, correct, yet glowing; it forms the mind to discrimination, while it engages the youthful feelings in the cause of truth, of freedom, and of virtue.

The state of public affairs during the disastrous year 1793, could excite none but painful emotions in the bosom of any lover of his country, and of true liberty. How deeply it wounded the tranquillity of Dr. Aikin, will best appear from his unreserved correspondence with his dearest friends. In the month of June he thus writes to one of the number:

"......I have found myself so little better acquainted with the interesting events that are passing, here at London, than you are at K., that I could not think them worth making the subject of a letter to you,—especially as their tenor can afford no pleasing matter for speculation. We are fairly immersed in a bloody, expensive, and I think, unjust war, and we must either lament its success, or rejoice in the calamities of our country. Such an alternative is enough to make one draw off entirely from political discussion, and I do it, as much as the occasional effervescence of *libera indignatio* will give me leave. I am obliged to those of my friends who wish for the sake of my interest to reduce me *quite* to the state of a *mutum pecus;* but at forty-six, if a man has not found out what conduces to his happiness, and has not acquired prudence to pursue it, I am sure little can be done by friends troubling themselves about him. Meantime, I doubt not but any part I may have taken in politics has been greatly exaggerated to those friends. . . . . . I belong to no political society whatever. I keep company, it is true, with persons of well known sentiments, who happen also to be some of my best friends, and I am not afraid in *private* companies of speaking without disguise. But these things I shall do at all hazards."

With another friend he thus expostulates:

"I thank you for your caution, which I know proceeds from true kindness. . . . . Seriously, however, my dear friend, I wish *you* for a moment to reflect, what must the state of public opinion in this country be, when expressing an abhorrence of hypocrisy and tyranny is to be called maintaining *French principles*, and is to subject a man to be treated like a foe to the human race! I know not what prospect of public danger may haunt *your* mind, but *I* can foresee no possible event worse than the conversion of Englishmen into persecutors and slaves. If persons of reading and reflection are hurried along with this torrent of false opinion, what is left on which to found a hope of saving us from the lowest degradation?"

Towards the close of the year he thus again opens himself to his first correspondent:

"With this parcel I send for your dear H. a third volume of *Evenings at Home*, and for yourself my *Letters*, just fresh from the press, and not yet published. Your free and full judgment concerning them will give me much satisfaction, as it is a judgment in which experience has made me confide. I cannot expect that my opinions on such a variety of topics will meet the perfect concurrence of perhaps a single reader; but if those of whom I think well shall approve their general spirit, and particularly if they see nothing objectionable in the *manner* in which my notions are offered, I shall not repent that I have sent them forth into the world. . . . .

"The confinement of Muir and Palmer in the hulks is an example of tyranny scarcely, I think, legal, certainly not decent. It has produced here much emotion, though perhaps only in the breasts of those who before were enemies to the present system. Several persons of respectable situation and character have been to visit them, and they are as well treated as such a situation will permit.

"There is no doubt that we shall have another campaign, though when Mr. Pitt comes with his demand of twenty millions (as I understand he will,) it may cause some blank looks among the *country gentlemen*. They are to be told, however, that every thing is at stake,—that their property and very existence depend upon the event;—and truly I begin almost to think that it does; though to me it is evident that this desperate state, with respect to ourselves, is of our own bringing on.

"The condition of France becomes every day more extraordinary;—a country without religion, without laws, without settled government, yet from individual ardour and enthusiasm capable of the most surprising and regular exertions, and never more formidable to its foes than at this moment. A very moderate degree of superstition would make one hunt through old prophecies to find a clue to events otherwise inscrutable, and many minds seem at present to look that way. It is however, perhaps, no superstition to suppose that this wonderful impetus, seemingly governed by no human principles, is an instrument in the hands of the Deity by which he means to effect some great purposes of overturning systems which cool reason is unable to master. And yet—I know not if the past experience of the world will authorise such notions of Divine Providence. All is doubt and darkness! If we live to see the end, we shall be somewhat enlightened.

". . . . Pray bear up against all the plagues of your profession. What profession is without them? You have a good (an uncommon) stock of merit of every kind to trust to. It cannot fail of insuring you at least a tolerable share of success. Enjoy the world as it goes, if you can. These are times in which long-sighted wisdom is arrant folly."

Soon after, he thus writes to Dr. Haygarth:

"Have you heard of the institution of a Literary and Philosophical Society here? It was first thought of by Dr. Priestley, and a few friends joined him to set it a-going. They made me Secretary. We are now near thirty members, several of them names well known in science and literature. We meet once a fortnight, and either converse or read papers, as it happens; but we are only organising as yet, and have done little. Our friend W. is a member; but our founder, alas! is going to leave us. This month will separate him from his native land, probably for ever. It throws a gloom over my mind which I cannot express. I will not rail or declaim on the occasion,—I only deeply lament.

". . . . I feel as I ought your kind admonition to political prudence; but too many years have gone to form my character and principles to admit of an easy change, nor can I find motives to make me renounce the greatest pleasure of my life, that of keeping the company I like, and speaking my mind. My *Letters* will show whether I am disposed to use this liberty immoderately. I shall be glad at your leisure to be fairly told how the sentiments in them appear to *you*."

The *Letters* here referred to, formed the first volume of a work entitled *Letters from a Father to his Son on various topics relative to literature and the conduct of life*, which appeared at the beginning of the year 1794, and which here requires a somewhat extended notice, as the most original, and, in several respects, the most important performance of its author.

Of the thirty letters of which this volume is composed, about one-third are on subjects of taste and literature; the rest relate principally to points connected with morals and the conduct of life. As the son to whom they were addressed had already completed his education, and was entering upon the duties of a profession, the topics discussed, as well as the manner of treating them, are adapted to the state of manhood, and it would be an error to regard the work as an elementary one. The author himself, in the valedictory letter, desires his son to regard them as *supplementary* to the systematic instructions which he had received from books and lectures. "Of such instructions," he adds, "it was the chief purpose to establish *principles*—a point of most essential consequence, which I hope and believe has been sufficiently secured in your education. My view in writing was rather to place in a strong and familiar light some subordinate truths belonging to the experimental practice of life, which, though not of the fundamental importance of the former, yet are of no small weight in promoting a man's happiness and utility. With respect to the letters relative to points of taste and literature, it has been their chief aim to obviate prejudices, and to give that turn to your thoughts which might enable you to judge and enjoy for yourself, without first appealing to the decision of a dictator. For freedom of thinking is the same thing in matters of greater and of smaller moment; and though I hold it of little consequence *how* a person is pleased, provided he be innocently so, yet I would not wish him, even in his pleasures, implicitly to follow the decrees of custom and authority, lest it should induce the same habit of passive compliance in affairs of capital importance." The general purpose here avowed is closely adhered to in the work, and it is interesting to observe the mode in which the discussion of a great variety and diversity of subjects is rendered subservient to its accomplishment. Two letters on *Attachment to the Ancients,* explain with sagacity and perspicuity the sources of the prejudices entertained on this subject, and suggest principles for distinguishing the intrinsic from the adventitious value of the literature of remote ages; Pope's *Essay on Criticism* undergoes free examination in another letter. That on *Nature and Art, and the Love of Novelty,* cautions against the exclusive spirit of the modern English school of taste; and the subject is further pursued in the letter on *Ornamantal Gardening,* while that on *Ruins* examines another object of fashionable admiration. Two letters on *Classification in Natural History,* and on *Buffon's Natural History,* open general views of the philosophy of this branch of science, and caution against a blind and exclusive attachment to the system of either the Swedish or the French interpreter of nature.

The letters on moral subjects appear to me to possess yet higher interest, and they inculcate still more impressively the free employment of reason in the investigation of truth. That on *Strength of Character* details the result of his own experience of life. In the early part of it, he says, that he pleased himself with thinking that he had not an enemy in the world; and that in fact a too great facility in giving up his own interest where it involved points of contention, and the habit of at least not opposing the opinions which he heard, had conciliated for him the *passive* regard of most of his acquaintance. But that no sooner did altered views and greater firmness of character incite him to an open declaration on important points, than he found that he must be content to exchange his former source of satisfaction for the *esteem* of a few; and notwithstanding the concern which he had felt from the estrangement of some who had renounced private friendship with him on public grounds, he concludes by decidedly advising his son not to be intimidated from openly espousing the cause he thinks a right one, by the apprehension of any man's displeasure.

The three letters *On the Pursuit of Improvement*, *On the Inequality of Conditions*, and *On the Prevalence of Truth*, unfold his views respecting the deductions to be made from the present condition of mankind relative to the real character and destiny of the species; and the hopes to be entertained of a progressive melioration of the state of the world. These are among his best pieces of reasoning, and those which most entitle him to the character of a philosopher; but the practical wisdom of those on *Cheap Pleasures* and on *Independence*, in which the writer speaks with all the authority of personal experience, has perhaps obtained for them the suffrages of a larger class of readers; while that on *Consolation* will be esteemed by all who knew him as one of the most precious records of his mind and heart.

Of the remaining letters contained in this volume, nearly the whole are referable to one or other of the classes already indicated and partake the same characteristics; and none of them appear to call for any particular remarks except that on the *Choice of a Wife*. In this piece, the author's ideas of the perfection of female character are strongly expressed; and I wish particularly to invite attention to them, because he always appeared to me the sincerest friend of the female sex that I have ever known. After stating the two main points on which the happiness to be expected from a female associate in life must depend, to be,—"her qualifications as a companion, and as a helper;" and enforcing this idea from various considerations, he thus concludes:

"I confess myself decidedly of the opinion of those who would rather form the two sexes to a resemblance of character, than contrast them. Virtue, wisdom, presence of mind, patience, vigour, capacity, application, are not *sexual* qualities; they belong to mankind,—to all who have duties to perform and evils to endure. It is surely a most degrading idea of the female sex, that they must owe their influence to trick and finesse, to counterfeit or real weakness. They are too essential to our happiness to need such arts; too much of the pleasure and of the business of the world depends upon them, to give reason for apprehension that we shall cease to join partnership with them. Let them aim at excelling in the qualities peculiarly adapted to the parts they have to act, and they may be excused from affected languor and coquetry. We shall not think them less amiable for being our best helpers."

To this I may add, that the view which he took of women as the *companions*, contradistinguished from the *playthings* of men, and the opinion which he often inculcated, that the talent of conversation was the first of all social accomplishments, led him to encourage females in the pursuits of every kind of acquirement capable of contributing to the enjoyments of cultivated society. Education indeed, in both sexes equally, he regarded as the process of preparing a human being to fulfil duties and to enjoy and impart happiness; and he opposed, with respect to both, the practice of occupying a large portion of the period of instruction in the acquisition of branches of learning totally alien from what were likely to be the objects and pursuits of maturer life. But whatever kind of knowledge promised to be a *permanent* source of advantage worldly or moral, or of innocent and respectable amusement, he wished to be freely imparted to women as well as men; nor did I ever hear him express a doubt of their capacity for excelling in any branch of literature or science. He loved female talent, and always treated its possessors with distinguished respect and kindness.

The degree of freedom in thought and expression assumed in these Letters, appears to have been, on the whole, not uncongenial to the feelings of the great body of readers;—they were received with general favour, and a second edition was called for within the year.

It has already been observed, that Dr. Aikin had early displayed a fondness for topographical pursuits. This taste had led him, during his residence at Warrington, to issue proposals for a History of Lancashire: the scheme had dropped at that time for want of sufficient support and co-operation; but the preparations which he had then made for carrying it into execution recommended and facilitated to him the performance of a somewhat similar task in which he now engaged. This was a *Description of the country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester*. The materials for this book were to be collected by Mr. Stockdale, the proprietor, and the arrangement of them, and the composition of the work, were alone undertaken by Dr. Aikin; but in fact it was from his exertions and the communications of his personal friends in that part of the country, that the most valuable portion of the matter proceeded; without which the performance would have been defective indeed. This work appeared in 1795, in one large volume quarto, illustrated with many maps and plates. The local knowledge of the writer has lent great clearness and animation to the geographical description which it contains; while the simple elegance of the style, the good sense of the remarks, and the absence of vulgar prejudices and partialities, strongly distinguish it, as a whole, among the works on English topography.

"Employment I must have, or I should die of thinking in a month," said Dr. Aikin in a letter to a friend written about this time. Such was the force of his honest heart aches, during the period of the reign of terror in France and the crusade against all free principles of government preached up by Mr. Burke in England, and resounded throughout the monarchies of Europe! For himself individually, he was ever prompt to own, with pious gratitude, the preponderance of enjoyment in his lot of life;—and though a temper the reverse of sanguine cut him off from those brilliant anticipations of future good which are in themselves a kind of bliss, the boundedness of his wishes and a modest confidence in his resources, blunted the edge of worldly disappointments, and always armed him against despondency. The declaration in question appears by the context to have been employed by him as a plea for occupying in literary labours the abundant leisure afforded him by a professional progress which promised to be steady rather than rapid; and which, in the opinion of some of his friends, might be impeded by his avowed attachment to pursuits perhaps more congenial to his inclinations. In fact, his pen was scarcely ever more occupied, or on a greater variety of subjects, than during the year 1794.

The History of Manchester employed a considerable portion of his time; and besides completing this work, he composed a fourth volume of *Evenings at Home* and a critical Essay on *Armstrong's Art of preserving Health,*—wrote a good deal for the *Memoirs of Science and the Arts*, prepared new editions of his *England Delineated,* and of his *Letters,*—wrote a life of his old, respected friend, Dr. Fothergill, for Dr. Kippis's new edition of the *Biographia Britannica**, and selected a small volume of observations in natural history, under the title of the *Naturalist's Calendar,* from the papers of the Rev. Mr. White of Selborne; designed as a sequel to that most delightful miscellany of observations on different parts of nature, the *History of Selborne.* Other objects of his attention are disclosed in the following extracts from his letters to his medical friend. After lamenting "the neglect which, in the present state of things, must fall upon all objects of general utility; when the fate of a fortress in Flanders occupies the public attention more than the welfare of half the world, and killing ten thousand French is thought of more consequence than saving ten times the number of English,"—he thus proceeds:

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* Only one volume of this edition was printed, which did not comprise Fothergill, and I am unable to recover the article.

"Every body seems to agree that the times are peculiarly unfavourable to literary undertakings of all kinds, and one may see that even those which occupy a good deal of notice for a few weeks, are soon completely forgotten. I do not find that the medical world are at present occupied in any particular novelties. The project of curing diseases by artificial airs has caused a little discussion, but does not seem to excite much expectation. Animal electricity has furnished some food for the physiologists, but I believe will not end in the discovery of any new law of nature. Many of the faculty here have been disposed of by appointments to military service, and some of the charitable institutions have of course had vacancies, but none worth making a stir about. Indeed I see them quitted with indifference by persons who had made great exertions to get in. For myself, I go on quietly in endeavouring to establish a professionl reputation among those who compose the little circle of my connections, and I am well content to wait the event with patience.

"I know not whether you have heard of a new attack upon the prerogative of the College of Physicians meditated by some of the *Licentiates.* The idea was brought out some time ago at a meeting of a society of the body, of which I am a member, and an elaborate paper stating the progressive usurpations of the College, and the legal grounds of resisting them, was read, and made a considerable impression upon most present. It was determined, previous to any legal attack, to state the matter to the College in a civil address, claiming our right, on the principles of the original charters, to be admitted to all professional honours on due examination.

"It seems very clear that the idea of confining the right of *fellowship* to graduates of our universities was an after thought, and is incapable of being supported on any principles of equity or propriety. Seeing the thing in this light, I have not scrupled to join my name to the *remonstrants,* though without any personal views, since I should not choose to go like a school-boy to be examined in Greek by my juniors.

"I have no expectation that the College will concede,—for when did any public body voluntarily resign the fruits of their own abuses? And if it comes to a law suit, the event will be very dubious, since the universities will doubtless support a monopoly in which they are most of all interested. But I think it useful now and then to cite to the bar of *reason* and *fair argument* causes which have nothing better than *power* to support them. This is the only way in which the weak can ever prevail against the strong.

"I know not with what eye you at present view the scenes going on in the world. The impression they make on me is a wish to arrive at a perfect apathy respecting the concerns of that animal called *Man,* any further than as they involve the interests of my friends; and as to individuals, I have my favourites among cats, dogs, and canary birds, for whose sake I have some regard to *their* species. And certainly I know among those animals neither tyrants nor slaves,—neither blood selling princes nor usurping factions.—Really, it is almost *too much* to reflect on! God bless you, and give you more tranquillity of mind than I possess!"

The contest between the Licentiates and the College of Physicians, excited a keen interest in the mind of Dr. Aikin; which he exhibited by active exertions in behalf of the body to which he belonged. Into this cause, as into the question of the abolition of the Test Act, he entered without any personal interests whatever, but simply from that hatred of every thing unfair and inequitable which was his leading principle and almost his ruling passion. In conformity with his opinion of the utility of citing power to the tribunal of reason, he afterwards took occasion, in the second volume of his *Letters to a Son,* thus to record the proceedings of the College, as an exemplification of the encroaching and usurping spirit of corporate bodies.

"In the reign of Henry VIII. a College of Physicians was constituted in London by charter, for the express purpose of examining and admitting applicants duly qualified for the practice of physic in the metropolis, and excluding and interdicting quacks and empirics. Some of the first members of this college were foreign graduates; and no condition of having received their education or degress at any particular place was thought of with respect to them or their successors; nor was any distinction of practitioners into different classes established, but all professional honours were left open to every physician of sufficient learning and good morals. In process of time, however, an innovation was introduced of distinguishing the physicians of London into two classes, fellows of the college and licentiates; the former possessing all the collegiate powers and emoluments, the latter having simply the right of practising. And the same monopolising spirit produced the further limitation, that no one should be allowed to claim admission to the fellowship of the college, who was not a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge. Such is the state of things at the present day; and this absurd and arrogant exclusion of men whose learning and professional skill may be inferior to those of none of their competitors, is pertinaciously maintained by a body, originally instituted for the sole purpose of the public good, but perverted in its object by the mean jealousy and selfishness ever attending the *corporation spirit*."*

The decision of the Court of King's Bench in favour of the by-laws of the college, by which the claims of the licentiates were finally quashed, always appeared to my father a denial of substantial justice; and he never spoke of the affair without manifest tokens of that bitterness of soul with which acts of wrongfulness and oppression are contemplated by the upright and noble minded.

After the presentation of the petition of the licentiates to the college for the restoration of their rights, to which the name of Dr. Aikin appeared as one of the subscribers, the officers of that learned corporation were pleased to refuse him the privilege, which he had previously enjoyed, of borrowing books from their library to assist him in the composition of his *Biographical Memoirs of Medicine*,—one of the numerous discouragements which by their united operation proved fatal to the progress of the work!

The following letter to Dr. Haygarth is dated in August, 1794:

"As I always feel a pleasure in even a distant communication with one whom I love, I do not delay to answer your last call for a letter; yet in fact I have very few materials of information to make out one. I am plodding at home among books and papers, and the world glides by me, not unmarked indeed, but with very little participation of mine in its motions. Clubs and meetings are suspended during the summer, so that I know little of what is the present object of interest to professional and literary men,—except the universal one, politics.

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* Letter on Party.

"The faculty here, as far as I can observe, enter little into speculations that are at all abstracted from immediate utility, and particularly, utility to themselves; and yet surely they are not at all *less* curious or public spirited than other people. But all public feelings are expended upon the great scenes now acting upon the theatre of the world, and private concerns are pursued with a view to emolument solely.

"The town is very full of reports concerning the destruction of Robespierre and his faction. The main point, I suppose, is true, though probably many of the current circumstances are mere fabrication. Whether this will or will not have much effect on the present state of things, I am unable even to guess. I should rather suppose that the causes of the present wonderful *motus animorum* throughout Europe lie deeper than to be quieted by the death of a few individuals. I am no believer in prophecies, and do not hunt for future events in the Revelations; but it does appear to me from a cool induction of numerous particulars, that the critical period is arrived for several of the things which have long subsisted in the world. Whether they will survive the crisis, and whether the state of mankind will be made better or worse in the issue, I am unable to divine. I suppose you continue your confidence in the soundness of the old ship *Britannia,* and the skill of her pilot. To say the truth, I scarcely know a stouter ship in Europe, and I can as yet sleep secure in her. Yet she is certainly much worm-eaten and rather overloaded. I wish she was at least well in port."

All the concerns, medical, literary and domestic, of this busy year had prospered; the talents of Dr. Aikin began to be justly appreciated, not only by his friends and by a rather extensive circle of acquaintance, but by the public; and it was in the following strain of content and cheerfulness that he addressed his beloved friend near the commencement of the year 1795:

"I should not have suffered so much of the new year to elapse without expressing to my very dear friend every kind wish for him and his during the course of it, had I not been uncommonly busy with my pen in various ways for some time past. But having now cleared my ground, I sit down with pleasure to converse a little on private and public topics with one to whom I have so long been accustomed to communicate every sentiment of my heart.

"The year has opened to me with favourable auspices, and I have never felt more easy in my concerns than at present..... As every thing in this world is relative, I think myself almost rich enough, and I feel an independence which perhaps an apparently more prosperous condition would not have afforded. My children are all promising; the two eldest in useful stations, and nearly able to take care of themselves. In short, *I* have no need to look on the other side of the Atlantic for a content which I have so much reason to acknowledge here. Oh, if, in the present state of things, one circumstanced as I am should look more towards the goods he has not than those he has, what moral benefit can be expected from the *home lessons* which every day is bringing forth!

"It is almost impossible at this crisis to write to a friend without saying something about *public* matters. Indeed, they may very soon become the most important of *private* concerns to us also. All other subjects are merged in them; and science and literature are flat and subordinate topics in all conversations. I *think* I can view the conduct of the different parties with tolerable moderation, and perhaps the great impending events *must* have happened whoever had possession of the helm. Great events may seem to have trifling causes, but in fact, the cause must be adequate to the effect; and who does not see that the progress of new opinions and manners could not but at length issue in a terrible conflict with the old? Where will it stop? Is there any moral or natural reason to suppose that this island can remain stationary in the midst of a changing world, connected, too, as she is with that world, and dependent upon it for the continuance of a system of commerce now apparently essential to her being? I would not indulge gloomy reflections,—indeed I feel somewhat unaccountably callous (like my neighbours) to approaching evils; but can we find any solid ground of hope and comfort? If you have any to suggest, pray communicate it to me. I assure you I am well disposed to think as favourably of futurity as I possibly can. Every body here gives up Holland;

and she will not only, in the hands of the French, cease to be an ally, but will be converted into a bitter foe. And where are our friends? Surely it is an awful crisis! such an one as neither we nor our fathers ever knew.

"In the mean time, may you and yours enjoy all those *domestic* blessings which are accumulated around you; and may we, in reciprocal friendship and internal tranquillity, find all possible support under the vicissitudes of mortal things!"

In the month of May he again communicates his sentiments to his friend, thus:

"I should not have suffered your last very kind letter to remain unanswered, had I not lately had so much employment for my pen, especially in *Stockdale's Account of Manchester*, (now nearly finished, and in which you, my friend, are not entirely unrecorded,) that extra writing became an irksome task.

"You suppose that the sentiments on public affairs contained in your former letter did not please me. I had certainly no right to be *displeased* with them, although they might not perfectly coincide with my own; and as to the advice conveyed in them, it was impossible for me to take it otherwise than as it was meant. It is true, I continue to think that the possible hazards attending the American funds are compensated by their better interest, and by the fundamental stability which I believe them to possess; nor can I think so ill of the principles of their government and their national character, as that, in the event of a war, they would take a step to violate their faith to individuals which the worst of the old governments in Europe have never done. Some difficulty in getting the interest during that period is all I should apprehend.

"With regard to the present aspect of affairs at home, I believe we do not much differ in our opinions as to matter of fact, however we may as to causes. I fully agree with you in expecting no mischief from sedition and jacobinism in this country. The character of the nation has fully shown itself. None can be more loyal, more attached to ancient institutions, more sensible that it has a great deal to lose. My apprehensions about Ireland are less than yours. I rely on a system of corruption which has pervaded all ranks and orders in that country, for keeping all quiet. They may bluster and talk large, and even break out in the remoter parts into acts of atrocity, but their chains are indissoluble.

"For all this, the prospect of things does not quite please me. I see irresistible power, under the direction, as I think, of little wisdom or honesty, involving us in difficulties and loading us with burthens which in the end must be *sensibly felt,* and that not by politicians and theorists alone. In short, I seriously fear that it will become a country in which a man of moderate resources, and with a family to provide for, *cannot live,* and then what will signify debating about our constitution? When peace returns, commerce will of course revive, and possibly to a very unexpected degree, as after the American war. But if taxes and dearness of living more than keep pace with it, what can we do, especially those of us who are out of trade, but *sink, sink?* These are forbodings which, without consulting Brothers or Halhed, enter my mind, and, if I had not other things to think of, would make me pass many weary hours. And can you, my friend, suggest any considerations which will make these dangers appear chimerical?

"It gives me pleasure that a *good report* of my professional progress has reached you, as that may be a prelude to its verification. The truth is, I have reason to hope that my medical character does not lose on trial, yet I have not much hitherto to boast of. The business of *pushing into practice* here is an affair so contrary to my nature and habits, that I am convinced I shall ever move in a small circle. The necessary expense of making a figure is a serious matter. A physician well introduced and connected told me the other day, that out of a practice of 500*l.* he was obliged to pay 200*l.* for his carriage, which was indispensably necessary to him. I shall never envy him his carriage the worst day in the year. My *booksellers* will never expect me to visit them in my chariot.

"I have lately had the honour of being made a fellow of the Linnæan Society, and also of the Medical Society in Bolt-Court (Letsom's); but as to this last, I am in some doubt if I shall assume my *blushing* honours."

Besides the completion of the *History of Manchester and the surrounding country,* which appeared in June, 1795, the literary labours of Dr. Aikin during this year consisted of the fifth and sixth volumes of *Evenings at Home,* and an *Essay on the Poems of Green,* author of the *Spleen,* (annexed). No one, I believe, of all his critical pieces was composed with greater pleasure in his subject than this. The principal work of this truly original writer, little adapted to the mere lover of elegant verse, had for him a charm which grew upon the intimacy of repeated perusals. While the profusion of uncommon thoughts and witty allusions with which it is studded amused his fancy, the pervading spirit of the whole had much in it to attract his sympathetic approbation. It is that of a philosophy somewhat on the Horatian model, in which habitual serenity of mind is sought by a renunciation of the common objects of ambition, by temperate enjoyments and modest wishes, by the indulgence of a vein of free speculation, and by a general indifference and neutrality in the disputes which chiefly agitate the world;—with an honourable exception however for

> "———the righteous cause
> Of a free press and equal laws."

None of the beauties of the author appear to have escaped the eye of the critic; and the easy but clear and lively manner in which they are unfolded to the reader peculiarly recommends the perusal of the entire piece.

The repute which the pen of Dr. Aikin had gained with the public, and the great extension of his connections among men of letters since his residence in London, now caused literary proposals to flow in upon him on all sides, and the year 1796 was the date of the commencement of more than one of his principal undertakings. The earliest of these was the editorship of the *Monthly Magazine,* his connection with which work peculiar circumstances render it necessary to state fully as well as accurately.

Almost from the commencement of that political division in this country to which the French revolution had given rise, Dr. Aikin had been of opinion that the establishment of a periodical literary miscellany characterised by a spirit of free inquiry and a general liberality of sentiment, was an object highly desirable, on account of the many important services which such a work might be made to render to the best interests of society.

In his letters to Mrs. Barbauld during the latter years of his residence at Yarmouth, this topic was frequently recurred to. His remoteness from London necessarily precluded at that time his proposing himself for the conductor of such a design; but he repeatedly mentioned that he was ready to become a principal contributor to it; and that he had already by him several pieces, both of verse and prose, which he would willingly dispose of in this manner. No one however then appeared with spirit to set it on foot, though many had expressed similar wishes and strong persuasion that a work of this nature would succeed.

After his removal to London, so many fresh objects of interest opened upon him, that I imagine he ceased to occupy himself with the idea which had been so long a favourite; but when the plan of the *Monthly Magazine* was disclosed to him by its projector, all his ardour on the subject revived; he closed immediately with the proposal which was made him, and exerted his utmost zeal and diligence in maturing the plan and providing for its due execution.

The part which he took was that of literary editor. All the original correspondence came under his inspection; articles were inserted or rejected according to his judgment, and the proof sheets underwent his revision. That portion of the work which consisted of compilation from newspapers, as the provincial occurrences and other articles of intelligence, was under the immediate direction of the proprietor; the account of public affairs also was printed without *any participation* of Dr. Aikin's. To provide materials for the Magazine was not strictly a part of his compact;—but the honourable anxiety which he always felt to perform every task committed to him in the best manner possible, and to promote the pleasure and instruction of the public to the utmost of his ability, prompted him, in this, as in many other instances, to go far beyond the letter of his engagement; and besides enriching it to a great extent with his own pieces, he was diligent in his applications to the literary characters with whom he was connected by the ties of friendship; and by means principally of their contributions the new Magazine assumed a rank in letters to which only one of its predecessors had ever ventured to aspire.

On the whole, this editorship, though certainly not unattended with causes of chagrin, was the source of considerable enjoyment to him. It brought him into habits of occasional intercourse with a great variety of characters, who often exhibited themselves in an instructive or amusing point of view;—it supplied him with a fund of intelligence on all the current topics of the time, which enabled him to turn his own speculations to subjects of general utility and interest; and, what he was far from valuing the least, it afforded him frequent opportunities of becoming the friend and counsellor of youthful genius, of bringing modest talent into notice, and of pointing out resources to merit in distress.

Towards the conclusion of the year, Dr. Aikin, having secured as his coadjutor his beloved friend Dr. Enfield, engaged in the composition of his great work, the *General Biography;* which employed the larger portion of his time during a period of nineteen years, and extended to ten volumes quarto.

The design was not originally his own; but none could have coincided more happily with his talents, his acquirements, or the habits of his mind.

An author will seldom find cause to regret the time and labour which he may have bestowed upon an abortive or unsuccessful work, provided he has applied to it, during its progress, the full force of his mind. Such essays serve to root deeply in the mind ideas which afterwards spring up with renewed vigour and beauty, and in a more propitious season mature their fruits. Thus it proved in the instance before us.—The efforts which my father had bestowed upon the composition of his *Biographical Memoirs of Medicine*, had obliged him to meditate long and deeply on the subject of biographical writing in general;—to measure the positive and relative merits of the characters who came before him by a scale in his own mind; and to learn the art of conveying, by a few spirited strokes, a clear and lively image of the distinctive features of every individual. What he had thus practised with respect to the professors of a single art in one country alone, he now undertook to exercise on the eminent of many classes in all ages and countries.

In the preface to the work, which was composed with uncommon care and attention, he has given a distinct summary of his own views of the subject; which he will be found unswervingly to have followed; in fact, the principles upon which it is founded are so analogous to his settled habits of judging and feeling, that to those who knew him intimately, this piece will appear not so much a prospectus of a book as an ingenuous exposition of his own standard of human greatness; and as such I shall extract some passages from it*. After observing that *selection*, *compass* and *arrangement*, are the three points chiefly to be considered in a biographical dictionary, and briefly stating, under the last head, the advantages of an alphabetical order, he thus proceeds:

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* Rudiments of the same ideas appear in a dialogue contained in *Evenings at Home*, entitled "*Great Men.*" Brindley is made an example in both pieces.

" *Selection* is the most important point, and at the same time the most difficult to adjust, in a design of this nature.........In the long lapse of ages, from the first records of history, the names of those who have left behind them some memorials of their existence have become so numerous, that to give an account, however slight, of every person who has obtained temporary distinction in every walk of life, would foil the industry of any writer, as well as the patience of any reader. *Fame*, or *celebrity*, is the grand principle upon which the choice of subjects for a general biography must be founded; for this, on the whole, will be found to coincide with the two chief reasons that make us desirous of information concerning an individual,—curiosity, and the desire of enlarging our knowledge of mankind. But under the general notion of celebrity many subordinate considerations arise.........

" The great affairs of the world are frequently conducted by persons who have no other title to distinction than merely as they are associated with these affairs. With abilities not at all superior to those of a clerk in an office, or a subaltern in a regiment, the civil and military concerns of great nations are often managed according to a regular routine, by men whom the chance of birth alone has elevated to high stations. Such characters appear in history with a consequence not really belonging to them; and it seems the duty of a biographer in these cases to detach the man from his station, and either entirely to omit, or reduce to a very slight notice, the memorial of one whose personal qualities had no real influence over the events of his age, and afford nothing to admire or imitate........

" That interesting class which lays claim to the remembrance of posterity on account of distinction in art, science, or literature, depending solely on personal qualifications and commonly acting individually, might seem to admit of an easier estimate of relative merit than the preceding. But the number of claimants is so great, that in the impossibility of commemorating all, many names must be rejected which on the first glance may seem as worthy of insertion as their preferred rivals. The difficult work of selection ought in these cases to be regulated by some fixed principles; and the circumstances which appear most worthy of guiding the decision, are those of *invention* and *improvement.*

"None appear to have a more decisive claim to biographical notice than *inventors;* including in the class all who, by the exercise of their faculties in an original path, have durably added to the stock of valuable products of human skill and ingenuity. Perhaps, in the history of the human mind there is nothing more curious than to trace the operations of an inventive talent working its way, often without any foreign aid, and deriving from its own resources the means of overcoming the successive difficulties which thwart its progress. It is in such a process that the distinguishing powers bestowed upon man are most surprisingly exerted, and that the superiority of one individual over the common mass is most luminously displayed. How much higher, as an intellectual being, does a Brindley rank, directing the complex machinery of a canal, which he himself has invented, than an Alexander at the head of his army! A Newton, who employed the most exquisite powers of invention on the sublimest objects, has attained a point in the scale of mental pre-eminence, which perhaps no known mortal ever surpassed.

"Between invention and *improvement* no precise line can be drawn. In reality, almost all the great discoveries in art or science have arrived at perfection through the gradual advances given to them by successive improvers, who have exercised a greater or less degree of invention on the subject. When the addition made has been something considerable, the improver seems to have a just title to have his name perpetuated ....The attainment of uncommon excellence in any particular walk, though not attended with what can strictly be called improvement, may be regarded as a just cause for commemoration; since it implies a vigorous exertion of the faculties, and affords animating examples of the power of effecting extraordinary things. Many painters, sculptors, musicians, and other artists of high reputation, come under this head. ....

"The class known by the general term of *writers* has presented to us difficulties of selection more embarrassing than any of those hitherto mentioned. It comprehends many whose claims on the biographer are surpassed by none; for where is the celebrity which takes place of a Homer and Virgil, a Livy and Thucydides, a Swift and Voltaire? But from such great names there are all the shades of literary distinction down to the author of a pamphlet; and where must the line be drawn? ....

"Two other circumstances by which selection may be affected are, *country* and *age*. We have seen no general biographical work which is free from a decided stamp of *nationality*; that is, which does not include a greater number of names of natives of the country in which they were composed, than the fair proportion of relative fame and excellence can justify. Perhaps this fault is in some measure excusable, on account of the superior interest taken by all nations in excellence of their own growth; and if readers are gratified by such deference to their feelings, writers will not fail to comply with their wishes. We do not pretend to have made no sacrifices of this sort; but being sensible that disproportion is a real blemish in a work, and that in this instance it partakes of the nature of injustice, we hope we shall not be found to have exceeded the bounds of moderation in this particular. We have most sedulously endeavoured to avoid the more serious fault, of awarding to our countrymen individually, more than their due share of merit in comparison with foreign competitors. In this point we would be truly citizens of the world.

"The circumstances ot *age* or *period* in which the claimants have lived, has an operation similar to that of country. We are much more impressed with the relative consequences of persons who have trod the stage of life within our own memory, than those whose scene of action has long been closed, though equally eminent in their day. Of course, curiosity is more active respecting the former; and to this natural predilection it may be proper for the biographer to pay some deference, provided he does not too much infringe the principle of equitable proportion, which ought essentially to regulate a work, professing to comprehend every age of the world as well as every country."

With respect to the *compass* of the work, he admits that biography will bear to be written much at large, and in judicious hands is often the more entertaining and instructive the more it is minute; and that in a plan so extensive as this, characteristic sketches can alone be given; but he expresses a hope that they will be found to have dismissed few characters of *real eminence* "without fully answering the leading biographical questions, What was he? What did he? His moral and intellectual qualities, the principal events of his life, his relative merit in the department he occupied, and especially the manner in which he was first formed to his art or profession, with the gradations by which he rose to excellence, have engaged our attentive inquiries, and we have attempted to develop them with all the accuracy that conciseness would allow."

"If," he adds, "we have faithfully observed the rules of composition above suggested, it is evident we cannot have been mere copyists or translators; since we may venture to assert, that no model exists of a work of this species, executed with any degree of uniformity, upon such principles. For our materials, it is true, we must in general have been indebted to the researches of former historians and biographers. . . . . But, in melting down the substance of different narrations into one, in proportioning the several parts, in marking out the characteristic features of the portrait, and in deducing suitable lessons and examples of human life, we have freely exercised our own judgments, and have aspired, at least, to the rank of original writers."

In the first division of the articles of the General Biography, the divines, metaphysicians, philosophers, natural and moral, and mathematicians were assigned to Dr. Enfield, and all the other classes were undertaken by Dr. Aikin; but the unfortunate event of Dr. Enfield's death before the completion of the first volume, compelled my father for a time to extend his labours. The whole of the letter *C*, excepting the mathematical articles, and a few of the authorities for which existed only in German and the other languages of the North of Europe, was written by him; but afterwards the late Dr. Thomas Morgan succeeded to nearly the whole of Dr. Enfield's department.

The copious extracts just given from a preface, all the promises of which were, on my father's part at least, so punctually fulfilled, may suffice as a general account of the nature of a work on which the opinions both of critics and readers have long since been pronounced; but a few particulars respecting the modes of study adopted by him during the course of his twenty years' task, and the effects upon his own mind of this application of his powers, may be thought no uninteresting or uninstructive part of his personal history.

It had been my father's previous practice to write over twice, and sometimes oftener, whatever he destined for the press; and with regard to his works in general, that *respect for the public,* which he always considered as one of the most indispensable of literary duties, led him to observe this custom to the end; but, with respect to his biographical articles, he soon discovered this laborious process to be unnecessary, and in fact scarcely practicable. Such, however, was his dread of suffering any marks of haste, either in style or matter, to escape him, that through the whole course of so long a work he persevered in the constant observance of another of his literary habits, which indicated the modest no less than the diligent composer. This was, never to commit a single page to the printer without causing it to be previously read aloud by one of his family in his own presence, and in that of any other members of the domestic circle who could be conveniently assembled. During these readings he listened with close attention, often mentioned the alterations which then suggested themselves to his mind, or the new ideas which struck him; and not only permitted, but invited and encouraged, the freest strictures even from the youngest and most unskilful of those whom he was pleased to call his *household critics;* good humouredly citing the story of Moliere's submitting all his pieces to the judgment of his old woman, as a proof that the honest impressions of *any* hearer or reader, were worth some attention. His principal object, however, in following this method was, to preserve his style from the fault which most of all offended him in every kind of writing,—*obscurity;* a fault which many instances prove that men of the most sagacious minds are frequently unable to detect in their own compositions except by experiment of their effect upon others. The statement of Gibbon, that he had never communicated to a single person any part of the manuscript of his history, was, I remember, particularly noted by my father on reading it, as a fact which went far in accounting for the perseverance of so able a writer in that enigmatical mode of expression which became the characteristic blemish of his manner.

How far the clearness of his own style, which is so perfect that I believe no one over found it necessary to read a sentence of his a second time to find the meaning, is to be attributed to the occasional suggestions of others, I find it difficult to decide; as the distinctness of his ideas, and his entire freedom from affectation, were very likely of themselves to have ensured to him this advantage; but I can speak with all the certainty of personal experience to the pleasures and benefits derived to his family from his social and communicative habits of study. From witnessing so closely the progress of his various works, they insensibly acquired a lively interest in the subjects of them ; these again became favourite topics of domestic discussion, and often led on to references to books and facts which from these associations were impressed indelibly on the memory. Nor could the reasoning powers fail of being strengthened and matured by these inquiries, carried on under the indulgent guidance of one who did not desire even from his own children a blind and prejudiced adherence to his opinions; but, on the contrary, never ceased to impress upon them as the most important of all maxims, that their reason was given them for the discovery of truth, and that there were no subjects on which it was not allowable, and even laudable, to exercise it independently, within the limits of modesty and candour. For myself,—if I may be pardoned the egotism,—I must ever regard it as the most important of many intellectual privileges for which I am grateful, to have grown up to maturity under the eye of my father during the time that he was engaged upon so many "fair designs," and especially on this ; by virtue of which the illustrious of all ages were made to pass as it were before us in a long and leisurely procession, while we questioned each of his title to a pedestal in the Temple of Immortality. This was indeed philosophy teaching by example ; and to the lessons then received, to the principles thus imbibed, I am bound, not in duty and affection alone, but in the strictest justice, to ascribe whatever favour any biographical attempts of my own may since have found with an indulgent public. But for my father, they never would have had an existence,—to him is to be attributed whatever merit they possess ; all that I can justly claim, is that of having treasured up his precepts, and followed, to the best of my abilities, his example.

——— *sequiturque patrem non passibus æquis.*

My father was accustomed to observe, that the rapidity with which the nature of his work obliged him to pass from one character to another, had at least this advantage, that it did not allow him to contract that partiality towards the subject of his pen which was the prevailing vice of detailed biographies ; and this remark leads me to the consideration of the effects which the habit of contemplating and delineating this boundless variety of human characters produced upon his sentiments and his mode of expressing them. The honest indignation which he felt at the exaggerated style of those partial relations which he was often obliged to take as the groundwork of his narratives, led him to renounce for himself, almost totally, the use of *epithets*, which he often observed to be among the most deluding and dangerous artifices of a disingenuous biographer. This self-denial may probably impart at first sight somewhat of an air of coldness and severity to his portraits; but when once the eye of the spectator has learned to content itself with the sober colouring of nature, I believe he will readily acknowledge that full justice has been done to the features and expression even of his most distinguished favourites. The moral discrimination of the writer was so perfected by habit and practice, which never had the effect of blunting his moral sensibility,—that he seized almost intuitively on the marking traits of a character, and exhibited them by a brief but masterly selection of the actions or circumstances in which they were most clear and prominent: having so done, he commonly left them to make their own impression on the reader, convinced that the cause of biographical, as well as of many other kinds of truth, is better served by a simple statement of facts, than by reflections and inductions in which, unless they be exceedingly trite and obvious, readers cannot be expected unanimously to concur.

The rare impartiality which presided over all his statements, both of facts and motives, has, I think, been universally acknowledged; no man, I am convinced, ever laboured more earnestly and steadily to subdue the prejudices to which all are liable; and I have sometimes even thought I perceived, that where he was conscious of a political bias, he has compelled himself to do *more* than justice to certain characters of the opposite party. Favourite characters, however, he unquestionably had, and favourite classes of characters; but his predilections were such as he could have had no hesitation in avowing,—such as he must have wanted his best virtues to have been without.

The lives of celebrated writers he treated with great pleasure when their personal qualities were strongly marked, and their fortunes sufficiently known to afford fair scope for narrative; but that nice observance of proportion which forbade him to enter into any considerable detail of literary criticism, was somewhat unfavourable to the interest of this class of articles. His predilection for inventors in every way sufficiently appears by his preface. Patriots of every land commanded a large share of his homage; but with respect to those of antiquity, he preferred, on the whole, the Greeks to the Romans;—when a Greek *was* virtuous, he said, his virtue appeared to be both of a purer and a milder quality than that of a Roman.

One class of French characters he greatly admired and took particular pains with; being of opinion that their fame, in this country at least, was by no means equal to their merit; and these were, magistrates,—such men as L'Hospital, La Moignon and Malesherbes,—courageous champions of the oppressed and miserable people, when despotic power was triumphantly careering over law and right;—beautiful examples of purity of life and simplicity of manners, when licentiousness, frivolity, and a base servility, had become characteristic of the court and nation. The small band of genuine lovers of their kind whose business in the world was doing good, "fair virtue's silent train," received from him the most assiduous and affectionate celebration:—holding as he did that all moral virtue was to be resolved into the preference of the social principle to the selfish, *disinterestedness* appeared to him the first of human qualities; and the eminent examples of it in every line, those which most deserved and required to be continually held up for the imitation of mankind.

To the list of Dr. Aikin's literary occupations during the year 1796, must be added two more of his critical essays on poems; those on Somervill's *Chace*, and on Pope's *Essay on Man*, both comprised in the present volume. The first of these poems was certainly not recommended to his attention by any predilection for the amusement of which it treats; on the contrary, it had happened to him, very early in life, to witness two or three instances of the tyrannical behaviour sometimes exercised by gentlemen upon their tenants and inferiors in hunting, which had impressed him with deep and permanent disgust. But the lively descriptions of the manners and instincts of various animals, and of some features of rural scenery, with which it abounds, appeared to him to render this piece worthy the perusal of the lovers of verse in general; and his remarks on those portions of *The Chace* will be read with pleasure.

In his choice of the *Essay on Man* as a subject of critical and philosophical remark, he was prompted, as I believe, not merely by its merit and popularity; he felt besides a strong impulse to rescue the author, with respect to this work at least, from the artful misrepresentations of his earliest editor and commentator, bishop Warburton; whose *dishonest* glosses upon the poet were often, in conversation, the theme of his indignant remark. In pursuance of this object, however, he has not judged it necessary to enter into any particular refutation of the errors, or falsehoods, of Warburton; but taking care to disencumber his own edition completely of his notes and commentary, he proceeds, after a general statement of their delusory nature, to supply the place by a clear and accurate analysis of his own; this is interspersed, in his usual manner, with warm and copious expositions of the poetical beauties of the piece, and with more general notices of its poetical defects.

Neither the line of his studies nor the general habits of his mind, led him to institute any inquiry into the original sources of the system which Bolingbroke is known to have furnished to Pope; he has not even mentioned the names of Plato or of Shaftsbury on the occasion; nor has he thought it necessary, in examining the poem, to show himself either the apologist or the assailant of the system, as a whole; but in his remarks on some particulars, the judicious reader will recognise the acute and powerful thinker. Thus, on the first epistle he observes, that "in laying it down as a maxim that 'We can only reason from what we know,' he seems to invalidate some of his own conjectural arguments concerning that *order* of the universe which is to account for apparent partial defects" On the conclusion of the second epistle, he remarks, that it is not easy to say what moral effect the author meant to produce: "If man's folly is equally conspicuous in all he does; if his weaknesses are made the instruments of his happiness; if 'in folly's cup still laughs the bubble joy,' and 'not a vanity was given in vain,' it would seem very fruitless to attempt by artificial wisdom to correct the designed and inherent defects of our nature."

While he was thus strenuously labouring to improve his time and talents to the utmost, while his worldly connections were daily increasing in number and consequence, and while his children were growing up around him to that important period when the hand of a parent was required to launch them upon the world;—symptoms unexpectedly appeared which threatened him with an early separation from all earthly concerns. As early as the middle of the year 1796, he underwent a rather severe fit of illness, which he judged to proceed from some affection of the liver, and from which he rightly supposed himself to be temporarily, not permanently, relieved. The usual effects of similar maladies on the spirits, were in his case distressingly manifest, though combated by those principles which constantly presided over his firm and well regulated mind. On recovering from this first attack, he thus expressed his feelings in a letter to Dr. Haygarth:

"...... I now think myself *almost* as well as usual, bating a little of my walking powers, and some of the vigour of maturity. At the same time, this affair has strongly put me in mind of mortality, and I have in expectation lopped off a good many years from my date of life. But my only inference is, that I must live while I can,—do all in my power for my family and friends,—enjoy myself moderately, and leave the rest to fate. And believe me, my dear friend, when I had in my own imagination a near prospect of *breaking up*, my spirits were perfectly tranquil and serene, and I felt that the 'leave to lay my being down' would not have been unwelcome. In fact, what is there at fifty (I shall be that next January) worth living on for, to a person of delicate health, with no new expectations, and involved in increasing cares? Life is not painful to me, but it is indifferent, and *for my own sake* I had rather be out of the way of the coming bustle, and leave the young folks to settle matters, without partaking in it. Yet I think it my duty to keep up as long as I can, because I believe myself not an entirely useless personage in this world."

During the whole of the year 1797, his health continued visibly to decline; and two or three little excursions into the country during the summer failed to produce any beneficial effect. Yet in the midst of languor and suffering, and with that clear perception of all the possibilities of common mischief which exercises the fortitude of a medical man in sickness, he never allowed himself to sink into the selfish and cheerless indolence of an acknowledged invalid; and his literary occupations were never abandoned, and remitted only in the exact degree that his bodily weakness rendered indispensable. The composition of the first volume of the *General Biography*, and the editorship of the *Monthly Magazine*, for which he also wrote a good deal, were the principal employments of the year. Towards the conclusion of it, his feelings were severely tried by the death of his dear friend Dr. Enfield, now still more closely connected with him by a literary partnership which had been carried on with uninterrupted harmony and mutual satisfaction. He immediately drew up a short biographical notice of this most amiable man and estimable writer for the *Monthly Magazine,* and some time after edited a collection of his sermons published for the benefit of the family, to which he prefixed a more copious memoir, somewhat in the mode of the French Eloges, but characterised by a simplicity and a genuine warmth of feeling, not often to be found in those boasted performances.* Such was the state of debility to which sickness had reduced him at the time of writing it, that nothing less potent than the kind and friendly motive which animated him to make the effort, could have carried him through the affecting task.

At length it became necessary for him to try in earnest the effects of country air, horse exercise, and a complete vacation from the fatigues of a profession; and early in the spring of 1798 he removed to lodgings in the town of Dorking in Surry, where he was cheered by the society of Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld, who came to join him, and by a kind visit from his constant friend Dr. Haygarth. Four months were spent by him agreeably and beneficially in this delightful spot; and the result of the leisurely survey of the surrounding scenery afforded him by his daily rides, was an animated description of the country about Dorking which appeared in the *Monthly Magazine.*† Nor was this the only record of his abode in Surry. It is from Dorking that he dates the commencement of the second volume of his *Letters from a Father to a Son;* and in the introductory letter he explains the circumstances which had carried him thither, and describes with great sensibility the soothing effects of the charms of rural nature on a mind agitated by the cares and hurry of a city life, and deeply wounded by "the desolating prospects which the late train of human affairs had presented to the lover of mankind."

On quitting Dorking, he hoped to recover a further degree of strength by a visit of a few weeks in Bedfordshire; but here the symptoms of his disease came on with increased violence; and it soon became evident that a final renunciation of London and of his profession was the only step by which life, with some remaining power of usefulness to his family and the public, could be preserved. To submit himself calmly to all inevitable evils, was a point of moral discipline which he had long and successfully practised ; and without wasting time in irresolution or fruitless regret, he gave up his house in Broad Street Buildings to the occupation of his sons, and in October 1798, removed to lodgings in the village of Stoke Newington, where he soon after hired a house which continued to be his home to the end of his life.

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* Appendix (B.)

† Appendix (C.)

This removal may be regarded as the termination of his professional life ;—henceforth he seldom acted as a physician but within the limits of his own village, and principally for the benefit of his poor neighbours ; for whose service he cheerfully set apart an hour every morning, during which he gave advice to all who came, besides frequently visiting them at their own houses. Literature was his sole regular occupation, and the domestic scene almost his only sphere of action. His weak state of health during the early part of his residence at Newington, and afterwards the love of study, which continually increased upon him, supplied him with reasons for declining the ordinary visiting of the place, nor did he make any considerable efforts to keep up London society ; well content to allow himself to be forgotten, by all but the few whom friendship, or real congeniality of taste, might prompt to make the effort of seeking him out in his suburban retreat. The philosophical moderation of his wishes, and the high value which he set upon that kind of independence which is rarely compatible with projects of worldly advancement, enabled him without much difficulty to reconcile himself to a change by which the career of ambition was closed upon him for ever. Habit gradually rendered agreeable to him a mode of life which at first had only appeared tolerable ; and while the success of his writings, besides making a welcome addition to his resources, gave him the well earned satisfaction of believing that he still contributed to the pleasure and advantage of the public ; —at peace in his own mind, beloved and respected by a chosen few, and happy in the cultivation of the domestic and social affections, he saw among the children of prosperity few to congratulate and none to envy.

Notwithstanding the slow progress of his health towards amendment, the year 1799, the first of his retirement, was one of the most productive of his literary life. His superintendence of the Magazine and contribution to its pages continued; the first volume of the *General Biography* was printed in the spring; and he filled up the interval between its appearance and the preparation for a second, with a translation of some Eulogies by D'Alembert, and with the completion of a second volume of his *Letters to a Son.*

The *Select Eulogies of D'Alembert,* from two volumes octavo; a short biographical preface and a few notes, are all the original matter contributed by the translator; but whoever is acquainted with the entire work, will confess that the task of selection was one of considerable delicacy. Respecting this point, the translator states that he has taken "those articles which appeared to him most likely to engage an English reader, as well as to afford that variety of subject which might display the author's sentiments upon the most interesting topics;" he also mentions with regard to the text of the original, that he has only subjected it to such slight occasional curtailments as the prolixity of the writer's style rendered desirable; but that he has freely omitted of the notes either portions or entire ones at his discretion.

With regard to the second volume of Letters, after the full account formerly given of the nature and scope of the first, a comparison of the contents of the two volumes will sufficiently illustrate the characteristics of the latter. The most obvious point of difference between the two, is in the length of the letters; thirty are comprised in the first, while the second, though of equal bulk, contains no more than seventeen. In correspondence with this diversity, the topics of the last are usually of a somewhat graver cast; and they are with fewer exceptions such as come home to the dearest interests of the reader. A suitable progression is observable in the style and tone. In these respects the first volume preserves some traces of the characters of youth, but the second is strongly impressed with the stamp of maturity. Subjects are treated with greater depth as well as copiousness, and the results of long continued habits of observation and reflection, and of the varied experience of life, are every where super-added to the dictates of native good sense or the promptings of book-learned philosophy. These diversities, greater certainly than the apparent interval of time between the two will account for, admit however of an easy explanation.

Not less than twelve or fourteen years previous to the publication of the first volume, the idea had already occurred to the author of embodying his remarks on a variety of subjects, moral, literary, and critical, in a series of letters, which he then proposed to address to his sister. On further self-examination, a doubt whether he had yet accumulated a sufficient stock of original ideas to justify his claiming the public attention in this mode, induced him to suspend his design, and give the precedence to other which he had meditated in less difficult walks of literature. He continued, however, silently and gradually, to make preparations for this favourite work; and in proportion as topics suggested themselves to his mind, to form sketches of which he afterwards availed himself. But the first volume of his Letters absorbed all those early collections, and when he sat down to the composition of the second, his *recent* ideas alone remained to supply him with materials. It will be interesting to observe the direction which circumstances, public and private, had given them.

The disappointment of the friends of French liberty was now consummated. The impetuous spirit of that people, after breaking out in those excesses of civil fury which had filled all Europe with horror, had found a fresh vent in the passion for military glory; the achievements of the new republic had already far exceeded the boldest projects of Louis XIV.; she had more than repaid to her continental foes all the evils which their aggression had inflicted upon her; England itself was threatened by her with invasion; and even those who in the outset had protested the most strongly against the war, as neither just nor necessary, were compelled to acknowledge that it had now become both, on the great principle of self-defence. Under these circumstances, every thing French had been branded with one common note of reprobation; and under the name of *French principles*, even those maxims of civil and religious liberty which are most consonant not to reason or philosophy alone, but to the genuine spirit of the British constitution, were exposed to contravention, to obloquy, and almost to proscription. It was *their* peril which principally weighed upon the mind of Dr. Aikin, and he flew to their aid with all the force of argument, all the power of persuasion or deprecation that he was able to command. In his introductory letter he already begins to unbosom himself on the subjects nearest to his heart. "What disappointment of elevated hopes!" he exclaims; "what heart rending scenes of public and private calamity! What triumph of violence and injustice! Who but must turn with loathing from successive fields of carnage, and shameless violations of all faith, equity, and humanity! Nor as yet do the clouds begin to disperse, nor can a gleam of brighter day be discerned through the gloom!" In the enlarged contemplations of philosophy, however, and in the conviction that good, on the whole, preponderates, he shows that philanthropy may find reasons to acquiesce in the partial and temporary sufferings of individuals, whether inflicted by human or material agents. The greater difficulty, he proceeds, is to witness with composure "the failure of prospects of the melioration of the condition of man by the efforts of his own reason, —and he who has adopted the pleasing theory of a progress towards wisdom and virtue, will deplore, more than any common evils, the subversion which seems to threaten *principle*." After instancing those fundamental maxims of free government which are most endangered, he points out the temporary causes which have occasioned this retrogradation,—cautions against the weakness of trying truth by partial or temporary results, or deserting principles on account of their erroneous or abusive application, —and ends by wishing for his son, "in the generous spirit of ancient philosophy," a free and independent mind, a habit of estimating men and things by another rule than the opinions of the day, of making truth the great object of his researches, and of respecting himself too much to be dazzled by artificial splendour or awed by arrogant assumption.

The next letter, *On Party*, is written in the same intention with the former. It combats the favourite maxim of certain writers, that parties are all alike,—that they are "the madness of many for the gain of a few,"—points out the essential and eternal moral difference between the party of abuse and that of reform,—then lays down rules and gives cautions for avoiding the violence and absurdity, the credulity, the unfairness, and the littleness of party; and thus concludes: "It is true philosophy alone that can elevate the mind above all that is low and debasing; and opposite as the characters of *Philosophy* and *Party* have usually appeared, I despair not of their union in one breast."

It is sufficient to name the letters, *On Authority in Matter of Opinion*, and *On the Respect due to Superiors*, to intimate to the judicious reader the direct application of these pieces to the circumstances of the times; in fact, the last of these sets out with an avowal of this motive of selection equally worthy, as it appears to me, of the philosopher and the free man. "At a time when, on the one hand, extravagant notions of equality have endangered the existence of civilised society, and on the other, arrogant claims of superiority are maintained to a degree subversive of all the principles of civil liberty, it may seem a delicate and hazardous matter to touch upon a subject so involved in party prejudice as that announced for the present letter. But considerations of this kind have little weight with me, in the choice of topics on which to exercise free and manly discussion. On the contrary, the more interesting they are rendered by temporary circumstances, the more they appear to me to demand that temperate examination whence useful rules may be derived for the conduct of those in whose welfare we are most concerned."

The Letter *On Openness and Sincerity*, refers very distinctly to certain difficulties in which the holders of free opinions were then, as at present, involved by the ruling spirit of the times; it also exposes the extravagant notions of the obligation to obtrude controverted opinions in all companies, at that time promulgated by the author of a celebrated system of Political Justice. That *On the Taste of Farming* aims at removing some delusory notions respecting the pleasures of an agricultural life, which were then extremely prevalent, and to which many a thoughtless deserter from the office, the counter, or the counting house, has owed the ruin of all his rational prospects in life.

Of the miscellaneous letters void of particular application to the times, three are based upon the biographical studies of the author. That *On a Criterion of Perfection in Writing*, I should point out as a peculiarly successful effort in philosophical criticism, and one which it required a rich mind to produce; yet it is I think excelled in reach of thought by that *On the comparative Value of different Studies*, which likewise exhibits very extensive knowledge, both of the various branches of human learning and of the characters of those by whom they have been eminently cultivated. On a topic like this, it is scarcely possible for any man to be perfectly impartial; some predilection for the objects of his own pursuit, some depreciation, or neglect of those with which he is imperfectly acquainted, will, in spite of himself, be apparent to others. A sagacious reader might probably in this piece detect some of the predilections or prejudices of the author; but if he had his preferences, it may be allowed that he was not destitute of cogent arguments to defend them

I quote part of the concluding paragraph for the sake of a remark which it suggests. "It is not, then, merely the species of study, but the mind and spirit with which it is pursued, that should regulate our estimate of the intellectual powers of the student. Folly often conceals herself under the mask of seriousness, and wisdom is sometimes light and playful. The latter knows she hazards nothing by occasionally descending from her dignity; whereas folly loses all by losing appearances." This observation is peculiarly characteristic; no man was less a dupe to *gravity* than my father; a solemn air, particularly in a young person, gave him a prepossession against its wearer which was rarely to be overcome; he certainly on all occasions thought "the merrier *fools* the wiser," and few things delighted him more in his biographical reading than any anecdotes showing genius, wisdom, or virtue, in happy union with that artless sportiveness which belongs to innocence and good humour alone. I am persuaded that in writing this sentence he had in his mind a story of the great and excellent Dr. Clarke, which he was fond of telling: This eminent person and two or three of his chosen learned friends, were one day amusing themselves with jumping over chairs and tables, and other youthful pranks;—suddenly Dr. Clarke, looking through the window and espying a solemn personage in a large wig making his approach, exclaimed in great apparent alarm,—"Boys, boys, be grave, here comes a fool!"

The letter *On the best Mode of encountering the Evils of Life,* forms an encellent sequel to that *On Consolation,* in the former volume; it particularly discusses the two principles of *resignation* under evils, and *resistance* to them; shows that, notwithstanding their apparent opposition, *both* may and ought to have their place in teaching us either contentedly to endure privations, or bravely to encounter obstacles. Referring then to the power of *substitution,* which he had before pointed out as the best alleviation under the loss of friends, and observing that "in all evils of a similar class the same relief should be sought after; and that the pursuit of it requires the union of the spirit of resignation with that of resistance,—the first, to prepare the way for the second,"—he has the following striking reference to his own situation:

"I have lost, probably for ever, that health which fitted me for active services and enjoyments, and with it many sources of happiness and utility. Shall I abandon myself to unavailing sorrow, and drag out a lifeless existence in the inaction of despair? No. My head and hands are still free,—I can write, read, and converse. To these, then, I must look for my future amusements and occupations, and I may yet make a good *salvage* for the remains of life." Those who followed him into his retreat,—who were his companions of all hours,—who shared his sentiments, his designs, his studies, and his amusements, can bear their honest testimony to the constant and cheerful mind with which he acted up to the spirit of these noble self-exhortations. We had no vain repinings to endure,—no selfish exactions,—no fretful idleness. While his illness continued, he was gentle, affectionate, uncomplaining, and still industrious; as health and strength gradually returned, we saw him active, cheerful, animated, contented with the life which he led, and partaking with a relish of the cheap and simple pleasures still within his reach. The cultivation of a little garden, with a few of his favourite rock plants, and an aviary; exploring rambles through the neighbouring fields and villages, the easy chat of the domestic circle, the occasional visits of a few of the most congenial and affectionate of his London friends, and now and then a social day, or a morning of sight-seeing in the great city, were sufficient to attune his mind to cheerfulness, and to invigorate him for the mental labour which he loved.

Portions of two or three of his letters written to Dr. Haygarth in 1798 and 1799, may interest some readers from the view afforded of his opinions or impressions on medical subjects:

"I am very glad that you mean to communicate to the world some of the results of your long and very attentive medical observation. Such as you are the only persons I wish to write on our profession. We want *facts,* and not fine-spun reasonings or plausible theories. I often feel absolutely shocked at the little advance that has been made in the healing art, in really important points, within our memory. Perhaps you are not of the same opinion, but I think you must agree with me that much ingenuity has been wasted on trifles."

And again: "Your kind plan of finding an useful and profitable employment for my pen, is an additional instance to many others of your friendly zeal in my favour, and demands a fresh acknowledgment. It does not, however, require much reflection to induce me to give up the scheme, since it would probably engage all my remaining days in a course of study which I have intermitted, and which would be less pleasant, and I believe less profitable to me, than my actual occupations. In truth, the interest I take in professional matters is now very small, and I have been completely disgusted with the absurdities of theory, and extravagancies or ambiguities of practice, with which the history of the art, down to the present day, abounds. I long ago became sensible, also, that to confine the history and biography of medicine to our island was a narrow and prejudiced plan, and that nothing less than a view of the whole progress of medical opinion and practice was an adequate subject for an enlarged mind. But this is such a vast topic, that nothing less than entire health, spirits, zeal, leisure, and opportunities can enable a person creditably to go through it. What Haller has done in his *Bibliotheques* is perhaps enough for mere utility,—and what an immense labour has he performed! To make the work also interesting and entertaining would be an Herculean task."

". . . . I am pleased with your *wooden tractors*;* for although I do not think much is gained by freeing mankind from one delusion, when they are so prone immediately to rush into another, yet I love to see fraud and folly exposed. The faculty, however, may thank themselves for several late quackeries, since they have evidently originated from their mysterious and subtile theories."

The desire of enjoying some personal intercourse with his friend, urged him in the summer of this year to take a journey to Bath, whither Dr. Haygarth had recently removed; but a serious return of illness was the result of this effort. Early in the following year, he experienced a slight paralysis of the left arm; this was attended with no permanent effects, but he well understood the warning, and he related the circumstance to his medical friend with the following remarks:—"This I take as a sort of token what I may some time expect; as indeed some symptoms had before led me to suspect. But if my *writing hand* is spared, I shall think myself pretty well off. I can indeed assure you that my spirits have not been in the least affected by this incident. I had *rather* not die by inches; but be it as it is decreed!"

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* The medical reader will recollect Dr. Haygarth's curious experiments with wooden tractors, made for the purpose of exposing the quackery of the metallic ones.

After this, his constitution began to rally; and he went on in a progress towards firm health, which continued with few interruptions for a long course of years; his spirits improved in consequence, and his occupations are thus described to Dr. Haygarth in June, 1800:—

"I continue to go on in my biographical trammels, which keep me to constant, but not very hard, work. We are now printing the second volume, which will be almost entirely of my composition. Enlarging my department has of course extended my line of reading, but I do not think myself much the better or wiser for all the *theological* matter I have been obliged to go through. Without the deciding bias of interest, an inquirer into these points is more likely to end in scepticism than in conviction. Error is so manifold, while truth is only one, that the chance of hitting upon the latter is very small. It is well that these doubts do not attend upon practice, and that duties are generally clear, however obscure may be the systems from which they are derived."

In consequence of some remarks of his friend in answer, the subject is resumed in a following letter, thus:—

"For the credit of the next volume of Biography, now almost printed, I must remonstrate with you, my friend, about your opinion of my incapacity as a theologian. Do you think that it requires a black coat to form a just notion of matters accessible to every man of reading? Is it not even an advantage to be free from the shackles of sect and profession? I flatter myself that no liberal man can take exception at my articles under that head. I have studiously avoided any mixture of personal opinion, and have faithfully endeavoured to assign to every one his just merits as a man and a scholar, not regarding the particular cause he has supported. However, it was certainly right that this department should be assigned to another hand, and it is already turned over to a proper person. What I retain is no more than I can do with such moderate exertion as is perfectly agreeable to me, and indeed necessary to keep me in spirits. You will find that a few physicians have passed through my hands; but I really cannot descend from kings and heroes to employ myself solely about the paltry intrigues and nonsensical opinions which occupy so much of medical biography. I hope you will approve my article of Boerhaave, who is hitherto my best medical subject.

"The Magazine still affords me a good deal of monthly employ. I have also varied my studies by writing some more critical pieces for editions of English poets. I wish you could see an essay on the poetry of Milton which I have written at the desire of Cadell and Davies for a new pocket edition. I think it is my best performance of the kind. You see I am not idle. Indeed I have more than one necessity for working, and I wish not to live longer than I can use my pen."

The *Essay on the Poetry of Milton* is inserted in the present collection; and I imagine it will be thought to justify the preference of the author. He spared no efforts to raise himself "to the height of this great argument," and the syle is wrought up not into elegance merely, but brilliancy.

To the summer of this year belongs the story of a visit, detailed in a letter to Mrs. Barbauld, which no reader of sensibility, it is believed, would wish omitted.

"Harborough, July 7th.

"Would you have thought me, my dear sister, a likely man for such a flight of sentiment, as that, being somewhat above forty miles from Kibworth, I could not forbear visiting it? In fact, it had long been the subject of my waking and sleeping thoughts, especially of the latter, and I was resolved to give way to the impulse. So yesterday after dinner I left G—'s mounted on his old mare, which I had tried before in a couple of short excursions,—and boldly pushed on for Kettering, 27 miles, that evening. This morning, starting early, I came to Harborough to breakfast, and thence, with beating heart, rode the five miles to Kibworth. The church is visible the greatest part of the way, so that my approaches were very gradual. I had even *sang froid* enough to turn off first to Lower Kibworth, by way of abridging the round. One of the first objects that met my eyes was Captain Dawes's old mansion with all the windows boarded up, and apparently quite deserted. It struck a damp on my spirits, from which, however, I recovered on learning from some workmen that it was fitting up for a new occupant. I was here told on inquiry that a Mr. Goodman, a farmer, lived at Smeaton. Supposing he was our old Betty's husband, I rode on; but on coming to the house, I found a good old couple indeed, but only by name and acquaintance connected with our friends. I was, however, cordially received, for they knew our family, and the man remembered me coming to church with my father. After a while, came in their son, the curate of the parish, a decent young man, who lives with his wife in the new and handsome parsonage house. I was informed that the other Goodman's now lived at Gumley, which was too much out of the way for a visit.

"I found that I had no acquaintance living at Kibworth; so mounting again, I made a slow circuit quite through the town, which I found vastly *lessened* in my eyes; yet our old house still makes a respectable figure. It is inhabited by the widow Humphreys. The casement windows and balcony remain as before.

"I made a complete tour of the churchyard, and recognised many familiar names among the tombs, but was disappointed in not meeting with that of our grandfather. Had he a monument? There were several become illegible through a coating of moss.

"Such has been my visit to the *native village.* I am not sorry I made it, though I sarcely know whether to call the impression on the whole agreeable or otherwise."

Dr. Aikin now accepted the editorship of a proposed new edition of Dr. Johnson's poets, with considerable additions and alterations. The plan was, for the editor to subjoin to the biographical and critical prefaces of Dr. Johnson such remarks, either by way of supplement or correction, as he should judge proper, to reject entirely some articles, and to supply new prefaces to the works of such poets, not included in the former collection, as it should be judged expedient to comprise in a new one. The strange omission of the author of the *Faery Queen* by Dr. Johnson,—an unpardonable instance either of neglect or prejudice,—was the first deficiency which he found to supply; and it was for this purpose that he composed the *Account of the Life and Works of Spenser* which stands at the head of his critical pieces contained in the present volume. Of this intended collection of English poetry, fourteen octavo volumes had been printed, comprising the works of Spenser, Butler, Cowley, and Milton, when the circumstances of the publisher put a stop to the undertaking. The remarks respecting the three last named poets added by my father, seemed to me incapable of appearing with advantage detached from the prefaces by Dr. Johnson, and they are therefore not here reprinted.

In the intervals of his regular occupations during the year 1801, Dr. Aikin composed for the use of young people, a very instructive little volume entitled *The Arts of Life.* It is in the form of Letters, and under the three heads of food, clothing and shelter, gives a clear and elegant view both of the arts of first necessity, and of those ministering to the comfort and convenience of man. The knowledge which it contains is very various and extensive, and of a kind which the books for young people do not usually afford; and it is well calculated to excite that *spirit of observation* which the writer considered it as one of the leading objects of education to inculcate. A further contribution to this effect was his *Woodland Companion; or a brief description of British trees, with some account of their uses;* published a few months afterwards. The subject was an old favourite, as appears from his elegant paper on the notices of trees in the Latin poets; and, in fact, the first sketch of the work had long been lying by him, in the form of a brief botanical description of trees, illustrated with neat drawings by his own hand; copied, I believe, as were the plates in the printed work, from Dr. Hunter's edition of *Evelyn's Sylva.* He now however greatly enlarged his design, and embellished it, in his usual manner, with quotations from the English poets.

About this time he received a very unexpected proof of the continued regard of one of the friends of his youth, in a bequest of 1,000*l.* 4 per cents from Dr. Pulteney, then of Blandford in Dorsetshire; with whom he had enjoyed no personal, and very little epistolary intercourse, since they had parted at Leicester eight-and-thirty years before. The circumstance touched him very sensibly; and the more, because he always ascribed it rather to Dr. Pulteney's reverence and affection for the memory of his father, than to his esteem for himself, whom he had known only as a youth. The merits of Dr. Pulteney as a physician, and especially as a botanist, could not be allowed to pass altogether unrecorded; and he had great satisfaction in paying the tribute to his memory of a short memoir, originally published in the *Philosophical Magazine*, and now reprinted.*

The cordial friendship entertained by Dr. Aikin for Mr. Wakefield, almost from the commencement of their acquaintance at Warrington, has been already recorded; and the renewal of their social intercourse has been adverted to as one of the circumstances which he anticipated with the warmest satisfaction on taking up his residence in London. It will therefore be readily conceived, that he had felt the sentence which doomed Mr. Wakefield, as the author of a pamphlet judged libellous, to an imprisonment of two years in Dorchester Castle, almost as a personal misfortune. His joy on the approaching liberation of his friend was proportionally lively; and it was well expressed in the following lines, published in the *Monthly Magazine*; in which it will however be observed, that some prudential counsels are gently insinuated amid the sincere expression of esteem and affection.

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* Appendix (D)

TO GILBERT WAKEFIELD, A. B.

ON HIS LIBERATION FROM PRISON.

Pure light of learning, soul of generous mould,
Ardent in Truth's great cause, erect and free,
Welcome, O welcome! from thy prison gloom,
To open air and sunshine, to those boons
Which Nature sheds profuse, while tyrant Man,
"Drest in his brief authority," and stern
In all the little jealousy of pow'r,
Restricts the bounty of a Father's hand,
And scants a Brother's bliss.——But now 'tis o'er,
And social friendship and domestic love
Shall pour their healing balm; while conscious worth
With noble scorn repels the sland'rous charge,
That brands imprudence with the stamp of guilt.
Meantime disdain not, learned as thou art,
To scan this world's great lesson: high-raised hopes
Of Justice seated on the throne of Pow'r,
Of bright Astrea's reign revived, and Peace,
With heavenly Truth and Virtue by her side,
Uniting nations in a band of love,
Have faded all to air; and nought remains
But that dire law of force, whose iron sway
The sons of men through every blood-stain'd age
Has ruled reluctant. When that sage benign,
The Man of Nazareth, preach'd his gentle law,
And listening crowds drank honey from his tongue—
When Mars, Bellona, and the savage rout
Of Gods impure and vengeful, shrunk to shades,
And rescued Man adored a common sire;
Who could refrain to hail the blessed time
Of swords to sickles turn'd, of general good
Pour'd in full streams through all the human tribes,
And shared alike by all? But ah! how soon
The glorious prospect darken'd! When the cross
Gleam'd direful 'mid the host of Constantine,
And took the eagle's place—when mitred priests
Mimick'd the flamen in his mystic pomp,

And proudly bent around a despot's throne;
Then, whilst the name at Antioch first rever'd
Ran conquering thro' the world, it lost its sense,
And join'd in monstrous league with all the crimes
That force, and fraud, and lawless lust of sway
Inspir'd to plague mankind. Then, Gospel rules
Were held an empty letter; and the grave
And specious commentator well could prove
That such an holy, humble, peaceful law
Was never meant for empire. Thus relaps'd,
The human brute resumed his native form,
And prey'd again on carnage.
Cease then, my Friend, thy generous, hopeless aim,
Nor to unfeeling Folly yield again
Her darling sight, of Genius turn'd to scorn,
And Virtue pining in the cell of guilt.
Desert no more the Muse; unfold the stores
Of fertile Greece and Latium; free each gem
From the dark crust that shrowds its beauteous beams,
And fair present them to th' admiring eye
Arranged in kindred lustre. Take serene
The tranquil blessings that thy lot affords,
And in the soothing voice of friendship drown
The groans, and shouts, and triumph of the world.

Mr. Wakefield replied in the following warm lines:—

TO JOHN AIKIN, M.D.

Next to that first of comforts to the soul,
The plaudit of a conscience self-approv'd,
Aikin! I deem the gratulation sweet
Of sympathising friendship, and a Muse
Terse, uncorrupt, ingenuous, bold and free;
A Muse from whom nor titled grandeur bribes,
Nor pamper'd wealth, a sacrificial strain.
Hence, with sensations bland of conscious pride
I feel the manna of thy tuneful tongue
Drop medicinal influence on my breast,
Ruffled, not torn, by Persecution's blast.
Thus, after chilling frost, morn's genial ray
Invigorates, cheers, expands, the shrivell'd flower:
Thus the broad mountain flings his cooling shade
O'er the faint pilgrim in a thirsty land.
Oh! may thy friend, as in the noon of life,
Responsive to the calls of truth and Man,
Self in benevolence absorb'd and lost,
Thro' the short remnant of his closing day,
With brave defiance, or with calm disdain,
Front the grim visage of despotic power,
Lawless, self-will'd, fierce, merciless, corrupt;
Nor, 'midst the applauses of the wise and good,
Lose the fond greetings of a Muse like thine!

Too truly, alas! did this excellent man here speak of the 'short remnant of his closing day!' Not three months after these lines were written, the friends to whom he had just been restored, were called upon to resign him for ever. He was carried off by a fever, the fatal termination of which was anticipated by himself from the beginning. When the friends who surrounded his bedside were anxiously striving to remove a melancholy prepossession which they could not admit to be well founded, some one mentioning my father, he eagerly exclaimed; —"Yes, let me see Dr. Aikin, I know *he* will tell me the truth!" He was immediately sent for, but came only to deplore the rapid advance of the inevitable catastrophe. To do, at all hazards, immediate justice to the memory at least of such a man, my father felt to be a sacred duty. How he has performed it, will best be learned from his own pen.*

But his sympathy with genius and virtue was not dependent on the emotions of friendship, and he was about the same time gratified with an occasion of paying a tribute to these qualities in the person of a stranger. At Liskeard in Cornwall, there had long existed, buried in the most profound obscurity, the Rev. Henry Moore, a dissenting minister of deep learning, particularly in biblical criticism, and of exemplary piety and worth. These qualities were recognised in him by a few brother ministers and by the very small circle of his congregation and acquaintance; but that he possessed, and had diligently cultivated, the talents of a poet of an elevated class, was scarcely known to two or three individuals. At length the good man, irresistibly won to confidence by the amiable and gratifying attentions of a lettered friend who sometimes visited him in his retreat,—the late lamented Dr. Pett of Clapton,—placed in his hands "a volume of MS. poems, which, with singular modesty, he requested him to show to some person sufficiently conversant with productions of the kind, to judge of their fitness for the public eye." The affecting sequel is thus related in the preface with which Dr. Aikin introduced these poems to the public. "I was applied to on the occasion; and I trust the readers of these pieces will be convinced that I could not hesitate in giving a dicided opinion in their favour. In reality, I scarcely ever experienced a greater and more agreeable surprise, than on the discovery of so rich a mine of poetry, where I had not the least intimation of its existence. That the author should have passed seventy years of life almost totally unknown, was a circumstance that excited the interest of all to whom the poems were communicated; and we were impatient that, however late, he should enjoy those rewards of merit which had been so long withheld. In the mean time, he was attacked with a severe stroke of the palsy, which, while it left his intellects free, incapacitated him from every exertion. There was now no time to be lost. My offer of taking upon myself the whole care of editorship was thankfully accepted; and a subscription was set on foot which met with the warm support of many who were desirous that all possible comfort should be supplied to cheer the helpless decline of such a man. But the progress of debility anticipated these well intended efforts. He sunk tranquilly under his disease on Nov. 2, 1802, having, however, lived to enjoy some satisfaction from the knowledge that there were persons whom he had never seen, who could regard him with cordial esteem and friendship."

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* Appendix (E.)

These poems, consisting chiefly of odes, elegies, and hymns, rich and ornate in their diction, and strongly impressed with the noblest sentiments of virtue and the warm spirit of devotion, were well received by a certain class of readers, and passed through two editions.

My father's health was now vigorous; and he was able without inconvenience to gratify himself with little tours through interesting parts of the country which were new to him. These were always performed in an open chaise, with my mother for his companion; and were repeated annually during a considerable period. His ardent love of the varied face of rural nature, and the talent for observation which distinguished him, rendered these little excursions, of which he always made copious journals, the source of instruction as well as delight; and his contributions to the Magazine were frequently varied by the description of objects which had thus fallen under his attention.

In the mean time, the publication of the Biography, which was regulated by the convenience of the bookseller, went on at a rate which allowed him ample intervals of leisure for other pursuits. A French translation from the German of Zschokke's *History of the invasion of Switzerland by the French, and the destruction of the democratical republics of Schwitz, Uri, and Unterwalden*, coming accidentally into his hands, the deep interest of the narrative of that heroical struggle for national independence, so engaged his feelings, that he resolved to give a translation of the work, with a preface, and a supplement bringing down the history of the democratic cantons to the restoration of their ancient form of government, which the First Consul had finally acknowledged the expediency of permitting.

The preface thus strongly expresses the sentiments with which its author regarded the progress of the military despot who was then effecting the subjugation of the continent and menacing the invasion of Great Britain:—

"The publication of this work in English at the present period was thought peculiarly calculated to promote that spirit of resistance to unprincipled ambition, and the schemes of universal domination, which is alone to be relied upon in the arduous contest in which the nation is now engaged. The history of the memorable struggle here recorded will shew what a people, very inconsiderable in point of wealth and number, was able to do in checking the progress of a host of invaders, by the mere force of native courage and the enthusiastic love of liberty and their country. . . . . Moreover, it cannot fail to impress every generous mind with an indignant sense of the insolence of a lawless conqueror, and the degradation incurred by a vanquished and subjugated people. . . . . The renovation of the democratical cantons, partial and imperfect as it may be, will present the useful lesson, that determined valour secures the esteem even of those against whom it is exerted, and softens that fate which it may not have been able to avert."

Towards the latter end of the same year, 1803, he occupied himself in the composition of a volume of *Letters to a young Lady on a course of English Poetry*;—an agreeable proof of the undiminished zeal with which he exerted himself to diffuse a love and knowledge of that noble art from which, during life, he had himself derived such pure and elevated delight.

His next contribution to poetical criticism was an essay prefixed to an edition of Dryden's Fables, which he esteemed it a service to the general reader to separate from the obsolescent mass of Dryden's political and controversial pieces. He has pointed out the excellencies of these delightful narratives with the truest taste and feeling; and his comparisons with the finished work of Dryden with the sketches supplied him by his originals, will be found curious and interesting. About the same time, he gave a new and improved edition of his translations of the Life of Agricola, and the Manners of the Germans; and undertook a work which requires a more extended notice, entitled, *Geographical Delineations, or a Compendious View of the Natural and Political State of all parts of the Globe*

"The precise object aimed at in this work," says the author in his preface, "is to afford, in a moderate compass, and under an agreeable form, such a view of every thing most important relative to the natural and political state of the world which we inhabit, as may dwell upon the mind in vivid colours, and durably impress it with just and instructive notions. In the prosecution of this design, I have been guided by the two leading considerations respecting each country, what nature has made it, and what man has made it. . . . . Both together have as much as possible been brought to conspire in forming the characteristic strokes of the sketch. . . . . No particular class or age of readers has been in my view in this performance. If it prove answerable to my intentions, young persons of both sexes, at the period of finishing their education, may peruse it with advantage, as a summary of what is most important to be remembered relative to the topics treated of; and it may afford compendious information and matter for reflection to those of riper years, who are destitute of time and opportunity for copious research."

From this statement it will be perceived, that it is a leading object of this performance to communicate those enlarged views respecting the globe and its divisions, with their various occupants, which may rightly be called *the philosophy of geography.* Its place, then, is neither among the regular systems of this science, nor among their abridgments for the use of schools;—it stands by itself, and is designed to follow, or accompany, not supersede, these works. That the matter of fact which forms the basis of the design must be derived from books, is almost too obvious to be stated; it was, in truth, the product of a very extensive course of reading; but not only the language, but those reflections which form what may be termed the *soul* and *spirit* of the work, are entirely the author's own. In tracing these *outline maps* of knowledge, it has formerly been observed that he peculiarly excelled; and the neatness and elegance of his execution is, in my opinion, no where more conspicuous than in the piece before us. The plan was a favourite one, and he worked upon it with ease and spirit. In all the branches of knowledge to which he applied his mind, it was characteristic of him, leaving abstruse theories and difficult problems on one hand, and dry details on the other, to seek in a middle course the useful and the agreeable combined. Such has been his proceeding in tracing his *Geographical Delineations*; and I know none of his undertakings in which he has more completely accomplished his object.

Many of Dr. Aikin's works have been re-printed in the United States, and an edition of this appeared at Philadelphia in 1807, with a scientific introduction and appendix, and copious additions to the original account of North America.

A few notices of the progress of his feelings and opinions may be gleaned from the letters addressed to Dr. Haygarth about this period. At the close of 1802, after observing that he had passed a pleasant year, in perfect health and spirits, and adverting to the welcome addition which had been made to his habitual society by the removal of Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld from Hampstead to Newington,—he thus proceeds:

"So you have the great ex-minister at Bath! Pray have you the honour of attending upon him? Though I am not an implicit admirer of his political conduct, I should be much gratified to hear him in a private room, for without doubt he is no ordinary man. The present state of things has brought me into an indifference to every thing public, which I cherish as the *euthanasia* of all that was uneasily active in my cosmopolitical character. I have settled into a conviction that England is the best country in the world, that he is the best minister who lays the fewest taxes, and that the truest wisdom, public and private, is to enjoy present good and avoid present evil. I am cured of all theoretical ideas of reform; and if I am not convinced that all *is as it should be*, at least I doubt whether *it can be better*. What remains with me, is a wish that we should not make that retrograde motion with respect to light and freedom which many seem desirous of promoting: but, after all, bigots cannot extinguish the freedom of the mind, and the fewer that partake of it, the more honourable the distinction.

"Our friend —— has returned from abroad as much an Antigallican as one could wish. He cannot be more so than I am, and I have not the least inclination to imitate the example of several of my friends, and visit France, with all its wonders. If

I can find leisure for a little domestic jaunt every summer, I shall be satisfied. We do inhabit a charming country,—that is the truth of it,—and I wish I could visit every part of it."

In the following summer, after expressing the satisfaction and pride with which he beheld *all* his sons in the ranks of the volunteers enrolled to resist French invasion, he adds:—"The present ardour and unanimity in defence appears to me highly honourable to the national character, and I trust will produce the effect either of preventing or defeating the schemes of our enemies. I confess, I wish we had a clearer cause, upon paper, for our hostilities; but the sacred duty of defence against an inveterate foe can never be questioned."

A letter dated in May 1804, thus records his genuine impressions respecting the character of Dr. Priestley, the tidings of whose death in the United States had been recently conveyed to England:—

"Possibly you may have seen in the *Monthly Magazine* a late biographical exertion of mine in commemoration of Dr. Priestley. I meant it as a plain narrative, rather than an eulogy or an apology, except that I was desirous of strongly inculcating a conviction of his perfect sincerity in all he wrote, and of the purity of his motives. I always lamented, as I believe you did, that he should have spent the force of his powerful mind upon the subjects which most engaged his attention; but he had a right to decide for himself, and no man was ever more beyond the influence of persuasion."*

In the autumn of 1805, the death of the excellent Dr. Currie again imposed upon him the melancholy duty of commemorating the talents and virtues of a departed friend. Since the period of his quitting Warrington, he had only once, on a hasty visit of Dr. Currie's to London, enjoyed the satisfaction of an interview with one whose society was so peculiarly formed to interest and delight him;—but the deep impression of their early intercourse had never faded from either mind; and Dr. Aikin was one of the two persons to whom Dr. Currie, in an affecting kind of *literary testament* traced with his dying hand, committed the care of his surviving fame, previously requesting, that if there were any memoir of him, it might be "*short and delicate.*" So commissioned, my father could not hesitate to comply with the request of the family in giving the brief account which his opportunities enabled him to compose; earnestly hoping at the same time that fuller justice would subsequently be done to the subject, by the distinguished friend whose name was constantly associated with that of Currie in every generous plan of private benevolence or public good.*

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* See Appendix (F.)

It was a striking proof of the enlarged and philosophical spirit which had presided over Dr. Aikin's critical pursuits, that his mind always remained open to the claims of fresh candidates for literary fame. A new poet was to him like a new star in the horizon of the astronomer, and he rejoiced and triumphed in the brightness of its beams. Thus, no predilection for an earlier school of poetry, had prevented his doing full justice to that which owed its origin to the genius of Mr. Southey and Mr. Coleridge; and I have reason to believe that he availed himself of one of the most respectable sources of periodical criticism, to express his warm sense of the poetical powers displayed in some of the earliest productions of these gentlemen. With Mr. Southey he had afterwards much satisfaction in cultivating a personal acquaintance, and he entertained for him the true interest of a friend. I well remember, too, the eager delight with which he first caught the animated strains of the *Lay of the last Minstrel*, which he used to characterise as the perfection of ballad poetry; and the high admiration, the deep though somewhat painful interest, with which he received the early cantos of *Childe Harold.*

In general, it may safely be affirmed that there was no poetical merit of his time to which he was indifferent; but about this period there arose a poet who engaged his attention in a peculiar manner;—this was Mr. Montgomery. In the *Wanderer of Switzerland*, and the smaller pieces by which it was accompanied, he discovered a freshness of fancy and a depth of feeling which in his judgment stamped them as true works of genius; at the same time, the tone of melancholy which pervaded them was too genuine and too profound, not to excite his sympathy. As it appeared that one at least among the causes of the author's dejection was the world's neglect, he endeavoured to cheer him by a few laudatory stanzas on his poems, inserted in the *Athenæum.* By means of a common friend, Mr. Montgomery was soon apprised to whom he owed this poetical greeting, and he wrote a letter of acknowledgment; this was immediately answered by Dr. Aikin, and thus commenced a correspondence which was carried on for a considerable time, with great spirit, and with much frank and interesting disclosure on the part of Mr. Montgomery respecting his early life and the formation of his literary character, without any personal intercourse between the parties. At length, Mr. Montgomery visited London, and a meeting took place, which proved mutually satisfactory and agreeable, notwithstanding the romantic expectations which the previous circumstances could scarcely have failed to excite. After some time the correspondence languished, but from no other cause than a want of topics of common interest; my father's esteem for Mr. Montgomery always continued unabated, and he never spoke of their intercourse but with sincere pleasure.

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* Appendix (G.)

Early in the year 1806, my father's connection ceased with the *Monthly Magazine*, and he immediately engaged in the establishment of a new periodical work, on what he regarded as an improved plan, entitled *The Athenæum.* The *thorough respectability* of the publishers concerned, and their entire forbearance of every kind of interference with the management of the editor, rendered his concern in this undertaking a source of great satisfaction to him; and no pains were wanting on his part to render it successful. He obtained the assistance of many highly respectable literary friends, and several months were almost entirely occupied by himself in preparations for the work, of which the first number appeared on the last day of 1806. It was carried on during two years and a half, when the proprietors, not finding the sale answerable to their expectations, gave it up: the elegant style in which the *Athenæum* was printed, which rendered it considerably more expensive than any other monthly publication of a similar nature, appears to have been the principal cause of its failure.

One family event of this year may be adverted to, on account of the lively satisfaction with which it was welcomed by Dr. Aikin, and the large addition which it made to his happiness and that of all who were dearest to him. This was the marriage of his son Charles to the eldest daughter of Mr. Wakefield; in whom we had the rare felicity to find the high-souled integrity and noble ingenuousness which marked her for the child and pupil of such a parent, in union with

> " —— all that cultured taste approves,
> Or fond affection dearly loves."

For fifteen years we enjoyed the privilege of her delightful and affectionate society,—her memory we can never lose.

The death of the Rev. G. Walker in 1807, the last survivor of the tutors of Warrington academy, gave occasion to a short memoir of him by Dr. Aikin originally printed in *The Athenæum.**

During a suspension of the publication of the Biography in 1809, Dr. Aikin employed himself in translating from the Latin *Memoirs of the Life of P. D. Huet, Bishop of Avranches, written by himself.* The work was inscribed to Mr. Roscoe in an affectionate dedication, and enriched with an introduction concerning the state of learning in the time of this erudite prelate, and with numerous notes, biographical and critical. It was published in the spring of 1810. A few months afterwards, on receiving from Mr. Roscoe a copy of his *Occasional Tracts on the War between Great Britain and France,* comprising some remarks on a motion of Lord Grey's in favour of peace, he addressed to his friend the following letter expressive of the state of his political opinions at this juncture :—

"I have just been reading your observations on Lord Grey's motion, and cannot forbear congratulating you on this new effort in the cause you have always had so much at heart, that of universal philanthropy. I find my sentiments so much in unison with yours on this subject, that I feel pride in the conformity. Peace, indeed, has long been my chief, I may say almost my sole, political wish. Regarding, as I do, war as the greatest of all the pests with which human society is afflicted, I think the termination of it an actual good with which any hypothetical evil consequences are not to be placed in balance ; and experience has taught me to hold very cheap all that human wisdom which submits to present and urgent ills through apprehension of worse that may possibly succeed.

"What effects may proceed from your publication I am unable to foresee. Probably your expectations are not sanguine: but at any rate you will have entered your protest against the madness of the public councils, and have contributed your share towards bringing the nation to a sounder state of opinion. The subsisting engagements with Spain must doubtless interpose a great difficulty to any negociations for peace till the fate of that country is decided; for I can scarcely suppose that Napoleon would consent to any arrangement that would leave it independent; but all your arguments pointed against the panic and indistinct fears of the nation, which are the permanent obstacles to peace, are independent of this circumstance, and seem to me perfectly conclusive.

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* Appendix (H)

"I should anxiously inquire, were we to meet, your sentiments on various other topics, on which I am inclined to believe we should readily harmonise; but a letter is not the place for such discussions."

In the year 1811, Dr. Aikin published a volume of *Essays, Literary and Miscellaneous,* being much enlarged and corrected copies from draughts which had previously appeared in the pages of the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Athenæum.* Three fourths of this work are occupied by two essays, *On Similes in Poetry* and *On Poetical Personifications,* which may be regarded as very complete *critical directories* for the employment of those splendid embellishments of poetical composition: they are likewise rendered agreeable to the general reader by a copious selection of examples from the greatest masters of verse, Latin, English, and Italian. The remaining contents of the volume are *Verbal Remarks,* principally directed to the leading words in political and religious disputes, and pointing out and exemplifying the proper and the improper application of them; and a few miscellaneous essays, greatly resembling, both in style and matter, his *Letters to his Son,* and in no respect inferior to them.

About this period, my father had entertained some thoughts of engaging in a history of English literature; but, on further consideration, the magnitude of the design, and the difficulty of finding proper coadjutors, deterred him from the attempt; the course of reading and inquiry into which it had led him did not however prove entirely unproductive. It now occurred to him, that such a view as he had afforded by his translation of the memoirs of Huet and the appended notes, of learning and its professors in France, might usefully be extended to England during the earlier part of the 17th century, when this country first began to take a distinguished station in the republic of letters,—provided any character of sufficient importance to fill the centre of the picture could be found. A short examination pointed out two distinguished scholars, one of them also eminent as a divine, and the other as a lawyer and politician, around whom all the notices of persons and things which he was desirous of communicating, might conveniently be arranged;—these were Selden and Archbishop Usher; of whom he composed lives which, together with the subjoined notes, fill an octavo volume. The share taken by these two learned friends, whose difference of party did not impair their mutual esteem, in the great civil and religious contests of their times, has obliged their biographer frequently to allude to these trying topics; and the performance derives additional interest from this circumstance. This work appeared in 1812, and was inscribed to John Whishaw, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn, as a pledge of high esteem and long and cordial friendship.

Towards the close of 1811, Dr. Aikin accepted the office of editor of Dodsley's *Annual Register*; an employment which henceforth occupied somewhat more than half his time in a kind of labour which was not on the whole unpleasant to him. Soon after, a transfer of the property of the *General Biography* to new hands, put an end to the long suspension of the work, and the completion of this task, in conjunction with his new undertaking, called upon him for the full exertion of his powers.

Early in 1813, in a letter addressed to Mr. Roscoe on the receipt of one of his political pieces, he thus expressed himself:—

"Accept my cordial thanks, my dear Sir, for the present of your last publication, which I perused with the melancholy pleasure of seeing good sense and sound argument employed in the cause of virtue and patriotism, but a cause not only depressed by the hand of power, but unpopular among those who are most interested in supporting it. The late political events have, I confess, deprived me of all expectation of seeing better principles prevalent in this country; whilst the general state of the world has as little allowed me to indulge hopes of melioration elsewhere; and were I not obliged in consequence of my engagement in Dodsley's *Annual Register* to attend to public events as they are passing, I think I should shut up my mind to every thing but old books, and old and new friends.

"It is fortunate that, interested as we may be in these subjects when they come before us, they do not, to most men at least, form the staple of life, and that personal and domestic concerns take, in fact, the nearest and most habitual place in our hearts. To me, I with gratitude acknowledge, that these are the source of pleasures which much overbalance the disquiets arising from occasional meditation upon the affairs of a world which, while it seems to me going very wrong, I have no power to set right. And, indeed, if I can suppose the same of other persons, I ought perhaps to conclude, that the errors of this world in the general are not so destructive to individual happiness as at first view they appear. And when I think, my dear friend, of you, with your natural good spirits, your active mind, your many domestic comforts, and a state of health, I trust, little impaired, I cannot but hope that election disappointments and party triumphs will make but small inroads upon your peace, or abatement of your enjoyments.

"Were I at present inclined to desponding thoughts, I should not find time to indulge them, for I scarcely remember when I was so much occupied. I am at this moment conducting through the press a large quarto and octavo; the former the 8th volume of the *Biography*, which is going on again, and I hope will meet with no more stops to the end. The latter, the *Annual Register* for 1812, which I am composing as well as printing. I am not commonly afraid of work, but I almost feel myself too much hurried with this double task. My health is however good, and I have seldom been in better spirits."

In the following year he addresses another friend nearly in the same strain of sentiment,—thus:

"Your Newington friends go on in the jog-trot of life, if not very gayly, at least contentedly. We have the enjoyments of health, family comforts, books, and a few friends: and surely this is a tolerable compromise with fortune in a world so full of change and casualty. For myself, nothing can be more uniform than my train of existence. My daily occupation is writing; my amusements, a visit now and then to town, walking, reading, and domestic relaxations. I am as yet scarcely sensible of the approach of old age, though perhaps others may be so for me. My health has never been better than through the last winter, severe as it has been. In short, were it not for some anxiety for the future, and the extinction of all those hopes of public and private melioration which I once pleased myself with entertaining, I should enjoy my existence as much as I have ever done. My first public wish is to see the restoration of peace, for none of the late triumphs which have been so loudly boasted of, at all compensate to my feelings the widely diffused miseries of war, and the personal burdens of it in which we all share. I more and more detest the horrid war-whoop sounded in our papers, and echoed by party and private interest, and in my scepticism respecting the good intentions of *all* men in power, I feel indifferent to any other success than that which will soonest give repose to the suffering world."

The *General Biography* was at length completed in the spring of 1815; and the termination of his twenty years task could not, on the whole, be other than a cause of rejoicing and self-gratulation. It would have been mortifying to leave such a work unfinished; and at the age of 68, not many years more of bodily and mental vigour could reasonably be reckoned on. Yet, there is always somewhat of melancholy connected with the conclusion of a long work;—to part with an employment which habits has rendered easy, and probably agreeable, is parting with a faithful friend; and for the occupations, like the attachments, of the active period of life, age can seldom find satisfactory substitutes. The form of a dictionary unfortunately did not permit him to take leave of the work with those general reflections,—that concluding moral, which comes with so good a grace from the experienced collector and narrator of a long train of facts; but his philosophical mind had long exercised itself in meditations suggested by his biographical studies; and some of their results will be found in the miscellaneous pieces comprised in the present collection, particularly in one of considerable length *On the Formation of Character*.

A letter to Dr. Haygarth, the last specimen of my father's epistolary style which I have to offer to the public, records the state of his feelings on public and private matters in the spring of 1815.

"Time has run on so unperceived amidst my different engagements, that I have scarcely been aware of the long interval in our correspondence; but I now feel impatient for a little epistolary converse with one who has for so many years possessed my affection and gratitude, and for information of his state of health and that of his family. With respect to me and mine, not much has occurred to break the prevalent uniformity of life. I have passed the several seasons since we met in general good health, and my ordinary routine of employment......... The mildness of the winter has been favourable to advanced life; January alone with us offered any severity of cold.

"But whilst nature is presenting a smiling countenance, what a terrible prospect is opening of human affairs, in consequence of the most unexpected turn things have taken in France! The success of this unchained tiger, this new "scourge of God," portends nothing less than the revival of a general war in Europe, of the event of which who can see further than the certainty of bloodshed, devastation, and every kind of calamity? If we take part in it, as doubtless we shall, what an addition to the burdens under which we are groaning, and which press so heavily upon the comforts of life in the middle ranks of society! I own I have scarcely courage to confront the evils which seem accumulating round us, after we had indulged a hope of seeing better days. I was about to conclude my history of the last year in the *Annual Register*, with a fond anticipation of general peace and prosperity; though I own the grasping spirit disclosed by the leading powers in the general congress gave me some misgivings as to the continuance of public tranquillity; but such a change as we have witnessed who could foresee? I wish to know how you, in whose constitution hope and favourable views of mankind are so happily predominant, are enabled to support your spirits on this occasion. Is it not too plain that Europe, at least as long as this fiend is in existence, (or, I may say, as long as the dreadful armies which support him are in being,) will be nothing but a gladiatorian amphitheatre? I am so absorbed at present in these thoughts, that I can scarcely divert them by books or common studies; but why should I endeavour to spread the gloom to a friend? Enough of this."

With a mind thus overclouded by public cares, constant employment was to Dr. Aikin a necessary condition of existence, or at least of any tolerable enjoyment of it; and as his powers were still vigorous, he was not long in finding some means of supplying the vacuity which had been left by the completion of the Biography. He formed a collection entitled *Select Works of the British Poets*, with short biographical and critical prefaces, which proved to be his last contribution to the cause of poetical taste; and he also engaged in a historical work which will permanently add to his reputation.

For many years it had been his practice, for his own use and that of his family, to note down in a concise manner the leading public events of his time, in the form and under the title of *Annals of the Reign of King George III.* These he now reviewed, and having greatly enlarged them by reference to various sources of authentic information, presented them to the public in two volumes octavo. The first edition ended with the peace of Paris in 1815, but a second brought it down to the death of George III. The preface claims for the work no other character than that of "a summary of the principal events, domestic and foreign, of the late reign." "In its composition," adds the author, "the objects in view have been, perspicuity and order in narrative, selection of the most important circumstances, and a strict impartiality, exhibited not only in a fair and ungarbled representation of facts, but in the absence of every kind of colouring which might favour the purposes of what may properly be denominated *party.* This last intention, which has never ceased to guide the writer's pen, did not appear to him necessarily to preclude every expression of his feeling on points involving moral or constitutional questions; but he trusts that he shall be found to have used this liberty with moderation and reserve, and without any effort to enforce opinions in their nature dubious or disputable. Where, indeed, in the records of history, can the period be met with, which, to one whose life has passed in contemplating the whole shifting scene, is calculated to inculcate a more impressive lesson against presumptuous confidence in speculative notions, or positive judgments respecting characters and actions?"

No one, I believe, not himself under the strong influence of the spirit of party, will dispute the perfect sincerity with which it was in this instance disclaimed. Who indeed can ever aspire to the difficult praise of impartiality in treating of contemporary history, should it be denied to one totally unconnected with public life, shackled by no obligations to a patron or a party, destitute of all aspiring views either for himself or his family, of a temper naturally calm and equable, who, near the close of a long life passed in the pursuit of wisdom and the study of mankind, sits down with the sole and single purpose of relating facts without suppression or disguise for the instruction of his countrymen? The style of this work possesses the neatness, perspicuity and vigour, which mark the manner of the writer; other praise it does not affect,—but how rare and how valuable is this manly and elegant simplicity!

The *Annals* appeared in the summer of 1816; the remainder of that year was passed by the author in health and comfort, and he was still planning new designs,—for no one was ever more stedfast in the purpose to "work while it is called to-day,"—but the night was fast approaching. Early in the following spring, the melancholy prognostication which he had drawn from the temporary numbness of his arm, so many years before, was verified by a severe and dangerous stroke of the palsy, which deprived him for a time of the use of his faculties, and nearly of the power of speech. After a few months, he regained his health, and with it his mental powers, some failure of memory excepted; but he knew too well, and felt too keenly, that this was a respite not to be relied upon for a day or an hour; and we had the grief to observe his spirits gradually sinking under the consciousness of a slow but sure decay of all his capacities of usefulness and enjoyment. This deplorable progress was strikingly hastened by a severe domestic calamity, the death of his youngest son.*

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* I trust it will not be judged a trespass against propriety to insert in this place a brief tribute to the memory of a man of genius and of worth, whose hard fate it was to die without his fame, originally composed for insertion in a collection of Lives of English Architects, which has not yet been given to the public.

Edmund Aikin was born at Warrington, in Lancashire, on October 2, 1780.

With the exception of occasional attendance at a day school, his education was entirely domestic, and his excellent and assiduous parents his sole instructors. The preference of private to public instruction, a choice seldom expedient with respect to those who are destined to be the artificers of their own fortunes,—was in his case decided by the early appearance of a considerable impediment in speech, which, united with a disposition reserved and sensitive in the extreme, rendered it alike indispensable to his progress and his happiness to continue to him the benefit of modes of instruction contrived expressly for his use, and still to surround him with the tender protection of his home. It was from this infirmity probably, and from the means adopted to lighten its pressure upon his spirits in childhood, that his character received its stamp, his genius its direction, and the destiny of his life its prevailing colour.

Pensive, imaginative, and taciturn from necessity, reading and reverie held the first place among his pleasures, and almost in infancy he discovered in the use of the pencil a resource which he seised upon with avidity, and continued to improve with ardour.

From misfortune of this nature our family had mercifully enjoyed a long exemption; during a period of five-and-thirty years,

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To copy, was of course his earliest exercise, in which he acquired unusual accuracy and neatness of hand; but he quickly aspired at something like originality, and in the thousands of human figures and countenances which his leisure moments were occupied in sketching, he shadowed forth the features and actions of his favourite characters in history, the visions of the poets whom he studied with unceasing delight, and the inspirations of his own fertile fancy.

It soon became manifest that his vocation was to one or other of the arts of design; and his father's removal to London in the year 1792, afforded opportunities for the cultivation of his talent which were sedulously improved; at the same time it was judged prudent to select as his profession an art which, by uniting the useful with the ornamental, seemed less precarious as a means of support than either painting or sculpture; and at a proper age he was articled to a highly respectable surveyor and builder. Adequate provision was thus made for his acquisition of the principles of construction, and of its mechanical details; but for all that constitutes the architect, in the noblest sense of the term, he was still to be indebted to voluntary study, to observation, reflection, and the promptings of his own mind. In this situation, while his diligence and punctuality secured the esteem of his master, the unfoldings of his genius realised the fondest hopes of his family and friends. The glories of his art were never absent from his thoughts; he sketched, he planned, he meditated, and his imagination revelled with delight amid temples, palaces, and triumphal arches of his own creation. On becoming his own master, he immediately commenced business for himself as an architect and surveyor, and soon obtained a moderate share of employment. Adopting the literary habits of his family, he also exercised his pen on professional topics, and several of the earlier articles in Dr. Rees's *Cyclopædia*, in the class of civil architecture, were written by him.

The laudable desire of seeing a free communication of ideas established among members of the same profession, and of extending the influence of an art which he loved, induced him to become one of the founders of the London Architectural Society, established on the principle of each member's producing in turn either an essay on some professional subject, or an original design, accompanied by an ample description, which became the topic of discussion for the evening. In 1808, the Society published in an octavo volume a selection of the essays read at its meetings, and one on Modern Architecture by Edmund Aikin led the way. This piece, composed in the vigorous and original style which distinguished his productions, displayed much reading, both professional and general, and, what is much higher praise, it exhibited a mind capable of penetrating into those first principles of art on which the just application of all technical rules must depend, while it evinced that enlargement as well as refinement of taste which belongs to such minds alone.

Two years afterwards, he gave to the world a series of designs for villas, preceded by an introduction of considerable length, in which he further unfolded his opinions on modern architecture, and on the kind and degree of imitation of the ancients best suited to the purposes and circumstances of the present times. He opposed with ingenuity and force the prevailing fondness for the Gothic, as applied to domestic architecture, and proposed as a substitute an adaptation of the Oriental, or Mohammedan style of architecture, chiefly as exhibited in Mr. Daniell's Views in India. This idea he illustrated by several designs of an ornate and picturesque character.

In 1812, he presented to the Architectural Society the most important of his my father had not once been called upon to resign a member of his household circle;—and in the state of decay to which he was

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works, his Essay on the Doric Order; which was so highly approved that it was determined to publish it, at the expense of the Society, in a splendid folio form, illustrated with several plates. This piece possessed, besides its intrinsic merit, that of supplying a desideratum. All architectural writers, from Vitruvius downwards, had treated of this order, the earliest and the most majestic of all, according to such ideas of it alone as were to be derived from the existing Roman examples, depraved imitations, as it now appears, rather than faithful copies from the temples and other public edifices which ennobled the cities of ancient Greece. At length, these venerable monuments had been explored and described by English travellers and artists, with skill and diligence worthy of the objects; and the learned and splendid work of Stuart and Revet on Athens, the Ionian Antiquities published by the Dilettanti Society, and the later work of Mr. Wilkins, afforded sufficient materials for a much improved delineation of Doric architecture, founded on pure and primitive models. Such a delineation, the pen and pencil of the author here afforded; he also compared and criticised the examples which he presented, and he concluded by giving some original designs of this order adapted to modern imitation.

Mr. E. Aikin afterwards resided for a considerable time with General Sir Samuel Bentham, and gave his assistance to this distinguished engineer in several public works which he was planning or executing at Sheerness, Portsmouth, and elsewhere. In this situation his attention was particularly called to the subject of bridge building, and he published in concert with Sir S. Bentham the designs for a bridge erected over the river Swale.

An interesting essay on St. Paul's cathedral, accompanying the designs of Mr. James Elmes, proceeded from his pen in 1813, which, with some observations on the architecture of the age of queen Elizabeth, appended to his sister's *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, completes the catalogue of his printed writings.

The preference which his designs for the Wellington assembly rooms at Liverpool received from a committee appointed to conduct the undertaking, induced him in 1814, to repair to the spot, where he superintended the execution of the building; and the encouragement of several valuable friends engaged him to fix his future residence in that town. Another public building, the Liverpool Institution was committed to his management; but it was here his business to adapt an existing edifice to this destination by alterations and additions,—a task of more difficulty and less honour than the erection of an entirely new one. He also decorated the town and environs with several elegant villas, and other buildings; and if, in some instances, he was obliged to comply with the fondness for modern Gothic against the dictates of his own taste and judgment, his profound knowledge of the principles of construction on which this style depends, enabled him to give uncommon correctness and elegance, and what may be called an air of good sense, combined with picturesque effect, to these difficult imitations. These qualities were still more strikingly displayed in many designs for churches which he composed on different occasions, none of which, however, have yet been executed.

The progress of an architect in the higher branches of his art is in this country slow and difficult; because great ignorance, and consequently great indifference, on the subject of architectural beauty and deformity pervades the British public. In addition to this general cause of delay and disappointment, the success of Mr. E. Aikin was impeded by temporary and local obstacles, and most of all, perhaps, by now reduced, so keen a trial of parental feelings as now occurred, was evidently beyond his strength. He avoided complaint almost entirely, but his anguish was profound, and its effects incurable. Enough of bodily strength however remained, to protract the struggle with existence till the mind was almost totally obscured. One sentiment alone, that of affectionate attachment towards those whose assiduity ministered to him all of comfort that he could yet enjoy,—and to her, most of all, whose tried and faithful tenderness had best deserved a husband's love,—survived and triumphed to the last.

After a long course of the distress and suffering incident to this form of natural decay, which those who have ever witnessed it will sufficiently conceive, and of which others may regard it as a privilege to be able to form no idea,—a stroke of apoplexy closed the scene on December 7th, 1822.

That life may not be prolonged beyond the power of usefulness, is one of the most natural, and apparently of the most reasonable wishes man can form for the future;—it was almost the only one which my father expressed or indulged, and I doubt not that every reader will be affected with some emotions of sympathetic regret on learning that it was in his case lamentably disappointed. To those whose daily and hourly happiness chiefly consisted in the activity and enjoyment diffused over his domestic circle by his talents and virtues,—the gradual extinction of this mental light was a privation afflictive and humiliating beyond expression. But in all the trials and sorrows of life, however severe, enough

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the reserve, the timidity, the scrupulous delicacy, and the nice sense of honour which characterised him. Meantime, life was wearing away; a constitution never robust had been undermined by severe attacks of illness; spirits never very buoyant had begun to yield to depression, and the brilliant visions with which conscious genius had cheered the morning of existence began to fade from before him. These changes were beheld with anguish by the few who thoroughly knew and could duly appreciate his many great excellencies, moral and intellectual:—his extensive knowledge, his strong and clear judgment, his fine taste, and his ardent love of the good and fair;—the sweetness and serenity of his temper, the modest gracefulness of his manners, the moderation of his wishes, the manly independence of his principles, and the perfect truth and probity which presided over all his words and actions. During the summer of 1819, he had struggled with difficulty through a protracted malady, and had been enabled to resume with some energy his professional occupations; but the seeds of disease still lurked in his constitution, and a winter journey from Liverpool to London the following Christmas perhaps hastened their development. Alarming symptoms recurred with augmented force, and after a painful struggle he expired at his father's house, at Stoke Newington, on March 11th, 1820.

of alleviation is blended to show from what quarter they proceed; and there were still circumstances which called for grateful acknowledgment. The naturally sweet and affectionate disposition of my dear father; his strictly temperate and simple habits of living, and the mastery over his passions which he had so constantly exercised, were all highly favourable circumstances; and their influence long and powerfully counteracted the irritability of disease, and caused many instructive and many soothing and tender impressions to mingle with the anxieties and fatigues of our long and melancholy attendance. His literary tastes were another invaluable source of comfort; long after he was incapacitated from reading to himself, he would listen with satisfaction during many hours in the day to the reading of others; poetry, in particular, exercised a kind of spell over him; Virgil and Horace he heard with delight for a considerable period, and the English poets occasionally, to the very last. The love of children, which had always been an amiable feature in his character, likewise remained; and the sight of his young grand-children sporting around him, and courting his attention by their affectionate caresses, had often the happy effect of rousing him from a state of melancholy languor and carrying at least a transient emotion of pleasure to his heart. His health also continued generally good almost to the end, and we had seldom the distress of seeing him under the influence of bodily pain. The final boon, an easy dismissal from life, was also granted him.

He was interred in the church-yard of Stoke Newington, where a simple monument is erected to his memory with the following inscription:

In memory of
JOHN AIKIN, M. D.
who was born at Kibworth, in Leicestershire,
Jan. 15th, 1747,
died in this Parish
Dec. 7th, 1822,
A strenuous and consistent assertor
of the cause of civil and religious liberty
and of the free exercise of reason
in the investigation of truth.
Of unwearied diligence in all his pursuits,
he was characterised,
in his profession,
by skill, humanity, and disinterestedness;
in his writings,
by candour, by moral purity,

by good sense, and refined taste.
In the intercourse of society
he was affable, kind, cheerful, instructive;
as a husband, a father, and a friend,
unblemished, revered, and beloved.

To this summary of my father's character, I have nothing here to add;—should any desire a description of his outward form, let them accept the following. He was of the middle stature, and well proportioned, though spare; his carriage was erect, his step light and active. His eyes were grey and lively, his skin naturally fair, but, in his face, much pitted with the small pox. The expression of his countenance was mild, intelligent, and cheerful, and its effect was aided in conversation by the tones of a voice clear and agreeable, though not powerful.

CRITICAL ESSAYS

ON

ENGLISH POETS.

ACCOUNT

OF

THE LIFE AND WORKS

OF

SPENSER.

THE early efforts in poetry of all nations are necessarily rude and imperfect. Many attempts must be made, before a barbarous language can be so disciplined into correctness of diction, and melody of sound, as to afford a material which even genius itself can work into any thing truly excellent And when improvement has proceeded so far that lines and passages are to be found deserving of real admiration, these will long be of rare occurrence, like specks of gold in a matrix of brute earth. Productions of such a period, however interesting they may be to the critical inquirer into the history of national literature, will give more disgust than pleasure to one who reads for amusement only, and who has already formed his taste upon the best models of different ages and countries.

It might be difficult to determine with which of the English poets commences that degree of masterly execution which is capable of satisfying a cultivated taste; but that Spenser is within this limit, will hardly be questioned by any one who has sufficiently familiarised himself with his writings to disregard the uncouthness of an antiquated diction. His name, too, by long possession, has obtained a permanent rank among the major poets of the nation; so that the student of English verse cannot, even through regard to his reputation, safely remain unacquainted with the works of one who fills such a space in the history of his art. As the undoubted head of a peculiar class of writers, Spenser, too, claims the notice of literary curiosity; for no adequate idea can be formed of the extent to which personification and allegory may be carried, without a perusal of the *Faery Queene.* On all these accounts, it is presumed that the admission of Spenser's works into a collection of the principal English Poets will appear much less extraordinary, than the former rejection of them.*

Few of the eminent English writers are less known by authentic biographical records than Spenser; and it is necessary to be contented with such a defective and partly dubious account of him as can be derived from a few traditionary notices, and from circumstances incidentally alluded to in his works.

Edmund Spenser was born in London, probably of obscure parentage, since he has given us no information on that point, though he has taken care to record that he derives his *name* from "an house of ancient fame," meaning the noble family of Spenser's of Althorp. It does not appear, however, that he ever claimed kindred with that house, or was acknowledged by it. He was entered as a sizer (the lowest order of students) at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in the year 1569. From this date may with probability be inferred that of his birth, which has been strangely misrepresented in the inscription on his tomb. Supposing him, when he entered at university, to have been sixteen, the usual academical age at that period, he must have been born about the year 1553. He took the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Arts, the latter in 1576, in which year he was an unsuccessful competitor for a fellowship. Mortification for this disappointment probably drove him from college; and we find that he took up his residence for some time in the North, but in what quality we do not learn. Here, an incident of importance in a poet's life occurred, that of his falling in love. His mistress, whom he has commemorated under the name of Rosalinde, after leading him through the usual vicissitudes of a love adventure, finally deserted him. Nothing could be more natural, than that such a circumstance should, in a mind addicted to the Muses, produce pastoral poetry; accordingly, he wrote his "Shepherd's Calendar," a part of which is devoted to amorous complaint, and of which the general strain is serious and pensive. This he published in 1579, dedicated, under the humble signature of *Immerito*, to Mr., afterwards Sir Philip Sidney. To the acquaintance of this celebrated person he was introduced by a friend named Gabriel Harvey; and as this was previously to his publication of the Shepherd's Calendar, part of which he even composed at Penshurst, it seems fully to refute a romantic tale concerning his first introduction to Sidney. This story relates, that Spenser one morning repaired to Leicester-house, an entire stranger, and provided with no other recommendation than the ninth canto of the first book of the "Faery Queene," in which is contained the fine allegory of Despair. Having obtained admission to Sidney, and presented his paper, that lover and judge of poetry was so struck with a particular stanza, that he immediately ordered fifty pounds to be given to the author; and proceeding to the next stanza, he raised his gift to a hundred pounds; which sum he doubled on reading a third, and commanded his steward to pay instantly, lest he should be induced by a further delay to give away his whole estate. Sir Philip was a character of uncommon and romantic generosity; but such a rate of estimating verse was not at all conformable to the spirit of the times. Indeed, the story would scarcely suit any patron upon record but a Roman emperor or a Saracen caliph. It is not to be doubted, however, that Sidney was a warm and liberal friend to Spenser. He caused him to quit his rural retreat, and try his fortune at court; and by his means Spenser was made known to the Earl Leicester, and finally to Queen Elizabeth. The bounty of his sovereign lady (who probably received more learned adoration, and at a cheaper rate, than any crowned head besides) is more credible in its measure than that ascribed to Sidney. She is said, upon his presenting some poems to her, to have ordered him a gratuity of a hundred pounds; which sum appeared so extravagant a reward for a *rhymer*, to the Lord treasurer Burleigh, that he deferred the payment, till he received a repetition of the order from his mistress, not without some chiding for the delay. Either this circumstance, or Spenser's attachment to persons disliked by the treasurer, rendered this potent minister a lasting enemy to the poor poet, who in several parts of his works alludes to this misfortune, which he is thought imprudently to have aggravated by some satirical inuendos. The Earl of Leicester's friendship, however, produced some valuable fruits. In 1759, he sent Spenser upon some commission to France; and it was probably through this nobleman's recommendation, that he was appointed secretary to Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton, when he went as lord deputy to Ireland, in

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* This article was written for a new edition of Johnson's Poets.

1580. In this situation Spenser displayed those talents for business which many examples show to be very compatible with a genius for elegant literature. He wrote a "Discourse on the State of Ireland," containing many judicious observations on the schemes of policy proper for that country. His services to the crown were rewarded with a grant of 3028 acres in the county of Cork, out of the vast forfeited property of the Earl of Desmond:—an ample possession, upon an insecure tenure; like all those which different rebellions have conveyed from Irish to English proprietors, and which have been usually bestowed with a profuseness proportional to the celerity with which they were acquired. Spenser's residence was the castle of Kilcolman near Doneraile, one of the Earl of Desmond's seats. Here he describes himself, in the style of pastoral poetry, as keeping his sheep "under the foot of Mole, that mountain hore," and frequenting "the coolly shade of the green alders by the Mulla's shore;"—names which have in some measure been rendered classical by his Muse. It was here that he first received a visit from that splendid character, Sir Walter Raleigh, then a captain under Lord Grey. In his pastoral fiction, Spenser gives Raleigh the title of the *Shepherd of the Ocean*, and highly extols his curtesy and elegant accomplishments. Raleigh proved his friendship by some court services which he rendered the poet; indeed Spenser says, that he "first enhanced to him the grace of his queen." Perhaps he was instrumental in procuring from the crown a confirmation of Spenser's grant of land, which he obtained in 1586. They went together to England, where it seems that our poet wished to obtain a settlement, rather than to continue in a country which, whatever might be its rural charms, was little better than barbarous in point of society and civilisation. It might be during his attendance on the court in this visit, that he was made fully sensible of the chagrins and mortifications which he has so so forcibly described in the following lines of his "Mother Hubbard's Tale:"

Full little knowest thou that hast not try'd,
What hell it is in suing long to byde;
To lose good days that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peers',
To have thy asking, yet wait many years;

> To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,
> To eat thy heart with comfortless despairs;
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

Spenser returned to Ireland; and if the leisure of an involuntary retreat was the cause of his writing the Faery Queene, we must rejoice at the disappointment of his wishes, which detached him from the obscure group of placemen and courtiers. Of that poem, it appears, from the author's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, that the whole plan was formed, and three books were written, in the beginning of 1589. These were published, with a dedication to Queen Elizabeth, in 1590; and it can scarcely be doubted, that in a learned and poetical age they would excite much notice and admiration. The author, indeed, did not leave them solely to their own merits; for he introduced them with complimentary sonnets to several persons of quality, among whom he did not think it prudent to omit Lord Burleigh. Yet in his address to that minister, he shews how little he could depend upon him as a friend to poetry—to his "idle rhymes, the labour of lost time, and wit unstay'd;" and he only humbly presumes that their "deeper sense" may obtain his approbation. The Queen rewarded him for his poetry and compliments by a pension of 50*l.* per annum, granted in February, 1591, and he may thenceforth be considered as her *laureate*, though the title was not formally given him.

It was not till his fortieth year that he repaired the loss of his Rosalinde, by a marriage with "a country lass of low degree," but who had a stock of charms sufficient to inspire the happy lover with matter for a very poetical and rapturous epithalamium. It is to be supposed, that, with such a partner, his life passed more agreeably in his rural banishment, and that he ceased to regret that court, the disquiets of which he had so acutely felt. In 1596, he published a new edition of the Faery Queene, with the addition of three more books, which only half completed his design. If the traditionary story be true, that the remaining six books were lost by a servant who had the charge of bringing them over to England, the event may be reckoned among the most afflictive that could happen to a poet, and would probably be felt by him as severely as his subsequent misfortune of the plunder of his house, and the destruction of his whole property, in the rebellion of Tyrone. He himself was driven for refuge to

England, where he soon after died, in 1598, probably a victim to grief and despondence. He was interred in Westminster-abbey, near the remains of his poetical father Chaucer, and at the charge of the noble-minded, though imprudent and unfortunate, Earl of Essex. Several of his brother poets attended his obsequies, and threw into his grave copies of verses to his honour. Nothing is known of his family or posterity, further than that one of his descendants came over from Ireland, in King William's reign, as a claimant of his estate.

Of the manners, conversation, and private character of Spenser, we have no information from contemporaries; our conclusions must therefore be only drawn from his writings, and the few known events of his life. To the intimate friend of Sidney and Raleigh, especially of the former, it is reasonable to attribute virtue as well as genius. His works breathe a fervent spirit of piety and morality; and it would be difficult to conceive of any thing base or dissolute in conduct, in conjunction with the dignity of sentiment which is uniformly supported in the productions of his Muse. A querulous disposition, however, occasionally breaks forth; nor does he seem to have been contented under a fortune more affluent than usually falls to the lot of a poet. He paid considerable court to the great, but without that extravagance of adulation which was not uncommon even among the eminent persons of that age. He possessed friends as well as patrons, and his death was lamented as a public loss to the literature of his country.

We are now to speak of Spenser in his poetical capacity. Fraught with the stores of ancient learning and of the school-philosophy of his time, and conversant with the poets of Italy, and the tales of popular romance, he came fully prepared for the execution of any plan of poetical invention which his genius, modelled by the taste of the age, might suggest; and he found his native language sufficiently cultivated to serve as a vehicle of poetical conceptions of any class. The revival of letters had not as yet produced in Europe the revival of that pure and natural taste which distinguished the best periods of Greece and Rome. A passion for marvellous adventure, carried to the limits of the absurd and burlesque, and a disposition to veil truth under the disguise of allegory, characterised the writers who were the favourites of the day. Spenser did not possess that rare elevation of genius which places a man above the level of the age; but he had the richness of invention, and the warmth of feeling, which present the manner of the age in its happiest form. His first performance, however, did not indicate a marked superiority over the contemporary poets of this country.

The SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR is a series of Pastorals, formed upon no uniform plan, but in general lowered down to that rustic standard which is supposed appropriate to this species of composition. The gradation of rural scenery according to the changes of the year, which the title of the piece would lead the reader to expect, forms but a small, and by no means a striking, part of the design, which is rather moral than descriptive. The shepherd's character is borrowed chiefly for the purpose of giving grave lectures on the conduct of life; of panegyrising a sovereign, or lamenting a lost friend: it is even made the allegorical vehicle of reflections concerning the state of religion. Spenser, at this period, seems to have joined that party which was most zealous for ecclesiastical reform, and which viewed with the greatest displeasure the corruptions introduced by the worldly pomp and dominion of popery. How adverse such topics are to the simplicity and amenity of genuine pastoral, needs not now be pointed out. It seems generally agreed, that the description of the grand and beautiful objects of nature, with well selected scenes of rural life, real, but not coarse, constitute the only proper materials of pastoral poetry. To these, Spenser has made small additions; and, therefore, the Shepherd's Calendar, though it obtained the applause of Sidney, and seems immediately to have given its author a rank among the esteemed poets of the time, would probably, in the progression of critical taste, have been consigned to oblivion, had it not been borne up by the fame of the Faery Queene. It is not, however, void of passages marked with the writer's peculiar strength and liveliness of painting. The description of the aged oak, in the moral fable of February, may be pointed out as an instance of this kind; as well as the whole fable of the kid and wolf, under May. The rustic and antiquated language of the greater part of these pieces was, doubtless, intended to correspond with the character annexed to pastoral poetry; but its simplicity is often carried to rudeness and vulgarity. The alliteration, which is also meant as a character of antiquity, will scarcely please a modern ear.

The FAERY QUEENE, the inseparable companion of Spenser's fame, is one of the most singular poems extant in any language;

and, from the unfinished state in which we possess it, we should probably have found it impossible to form a clear conception of the author's plan in writing it, had he not, in a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, prefixed to the publication of the first three books, given its general argument. We there learn, that his leading purpose—a truly noble one—was to train a person of rank in "vertuous and gentle discipline," by exhibiting a perfect example of the twelve private moral virtues, as they are enumerated by Aristotle. This is done in "a continued allegory or dark conceit," rendered more dark than the usual obscurity of allegorical fiction by an extraordinary involution of the plot. The general hero, or image of perfect excellence, is the British prince Arthur, so renowned in legendary history; yet each several book has its particular hero, whose adventures allegorically display the exercise of that virtue which is the proper subject of the book. In order, therefore, to preserve the unity of the whole, Prince Arthur is occasionally introduced as an auxiliary of these allegorical knights in their most dangerous adventures. The quality peculiarly attributed to him is Magnificence, which, in modern language, would perhaps rather be termed Magnanimity, or Greatness of Soul, as being the sum and perfection of all the other virtues. He is enamoured in a vision with the beauty of the *Faery Queene*, and comes to seek her in Faery Land; and this is the grand fable of the piece. But while the Faery Queene represents Glory in the general intention, she is also, in the particular meaning, a type of Queen Elizabeth, whose dominion is the Faery land. Arthur, then, wooes Glory in his proper person; and the *time* of the fable is represented to be that of the real commencement of his history, part of which is here copied from Geoffrey of Monmouth. But Queen Elizabeth, or Gloriana, is likewise identified by circumstances in her real history; and the great persons in her court are frequently alluded to in the characters of the fairy or allegorical knights. And, as if all this confusion were not sufficient to perplex the reader, Spenser had thought proper to reserve till the twelfth or last book, the development of the occasion which puts all his knights in motion; and which, it seems, was to be an annual feast kept by the Faery Queene for twelve days; on each of which, in conformity to the manners of chivalry, some distressed damsel, orphan, or other sufferer under injustice and oppression, appears as a suitor for aid, and receives from the queen a champion. The reason given by the poet for delaying this piece of information is, that he might imitate his epic predecessors, in breaking at once into the action, without the formality of a historical introduction. But to suffer the whole action to elapse, before the reader is made properly acquainted with the actors, and the cause in which they are engaged, is surely a violent sacrifice to a principle, the justness of which, even in a much more sober application, may be questioned. On commencing the Faery Queene, it is now impossible, without consulting the author's prefatory epistle, to conceive that it is to have any other subject than the adventures of the Red-cross knight; or to form any notion concerning the title of the poem, and the connection this imaginary *Queen* is to have with its persons and events.

From this view of the plan of Spenser's great poem, it will probably appear that its merit consists rather in affording a boundless field for the range of fancy, than in that concentration of the interest upon some one important point, which is the essential character of the genuine epic. Were each book, indeed, to be regarded as a separate and complete piece, having its own distinct hero, this effect might be said to be in some measure produced; but such was not the author's intention, since he avowedly aims at connecting the whole by means of his general hero, Prince Arthur. But this personage, who seldom appears but as a subordinate and auxiliary character, and in some of the books absolutely performs nothing, can only in the theory of the poem be regarded as serving this purpose; in the practice, he is found to excite little either of curiosity or interest. Relinquishing, therefore, any further consideration of plan and design, we shall proceed to consider Spenser's character as an allegorical painter, in the detached figures and groups which strike the eye in ranging through his gallery of pictures. In fact, detached beauties are what the mind principally dwells upon even in the most regular compositions; and, after the first perusal, Orlando Furioso and the Eneid are alike recurred to for their fine passages alone.

The groundwork of all Spenser's fictions is the system of chivalry, as displayed in the romances of the time, and in the principal productions of Italian poetry. Knights wandering in search of adventures, distressed ladies, giants, Saracens, savages, dragons, enchantments, forests, and castles, were the materials with which these creations of the fancy were fabricated. Some of them professed to be histories, or real narrations; but in many, "more was meant than met the ear," and moral or metaphysical ideas were darkly presented under the garb of visible beings. So meritorious was thought this alliance of a secret meaning with an obvious one, that Tasso, after he had formed a noble epic poem on the basis of true history, and indeed with an uncommon attention to reality in manners and characters, thought it advisable to add a key to the whole, by which it was turned into a theological allegory. Fortunately, this appears to have been a mere after thought which had no influence upon the plan and conduct of the poem. Ariosto, on the other hand, who is generally a simple narrator of adventures, given as real, however extravagant, occasionally intermixed fictions of pure allegory. But Spenser is throughout allegorical in his design, except as far as he meant to interweave the legendary tales of ancient British history, on account of their connection with his human hero, Prince Arthur. All his other heroes are Virtues personified by knights errant; and this uniformity of fiction would have produced a tiresome sameness in the action, had not the poet possessed that uncommon fertility of invention, and force of description, which are his characteristics. In all the records of poetry, no author can probably be found who approaches him in the facility with which he embodies abstract ideas, and converts them into actors in his fable. It is true, he found in the extensive regions of romance a vast variety of forms ready to assume the moral characters most appropriated to their natures; nor was he very nice in the choice of these beings, or very careful to preserve consistency in their figures or employment. Yet, on the whole, he may be reckoned the greatest master of *personification* that ever existed; and more original delineations of this kind are to be met with in the Faery Queene, than, perhaps, in all other poems united. Some of these are truly excellent, and are wrought into scenes of wonderful power. The allegory of *Despair* in the first book, may be placed at the head of all such fictions, as well for just conception and skilful management, as for unrivalled strength of description. It seems impossible by the medium of words to call up visual images in the mind with more force and distinctness, than is done in the pictures of the knight flying from Despair, of Despair himself in his cave, and of the Red-cross knight receiving the dagger from his hands. The allegory of *Mammon* is distinguished by richness of invention, in the multiplicity of personifications, and the romantic and sublime wildness of the scenery. The *Masque of Cupid* abounds in admirable single figures, though, perhaps, defective in the grouping. These are only a few instances out of the many striking efforts of imagination presented in the Faery Queene, which will ever render it the favourite study of those who delight in this branch of poetical invention.

Of Spenser's allegorical figures it may be observed, that some are merely the natural representations of a human being under the influence of the passion or quality intended to be personified; some are wholly emblematical, expressing their character by means of types and symbols; and in some, both these modes of painting are combined Examples of the first, or natural mode, may be found in the picture of *Fear* in the Masque of Cupid (B. iii. c. 12.); in that of *Despair* already mentioned; and in those of *Heavenly Contemplation* (B. i. c. 10.), and of *Hypocrisy* (B. i. c. 1.):—of the second, or emblematical mode, in the figure of *Fancy* in the Masque of Cupid; and in that of *Faith* (B. i. c. 10.): —of the third, or mixed mode, in *Disdain* (B. vi. c. 7.); *Pride* and her counsellors (B. i. c. 4); *Care* (B. iv. c. 5.); and *Suspicion* (B. iii. c. 12.) It may readily be conceived, that this variety of delineation will produce occasional inconsistencies; that action and passion will often be confounded; and that the manner in which these fancy-formed beings are employed, will frequently be unsuitable to their nature. These are defects from which complex and continued allegory can never be free. To create a new system of things, is too great an effort of the imagination to be long and uniformly supported; and Spenser, as the most copious of allegorists, is perhaps the most exuberant in faults. His forms are often grotesque and disgusting, sometimes impossible; and he not unfrequently makes a breach in the personification, by intermixing the ideas of reality with those of fiction. In a critical commentary it might be proper to point out all these imperfections; but in a preliminary essay it is sufficient to apprise the reader of taste that they exist, and leave the detection of them to his own attentive research. He will find them exemplified not only in Spenser, but in every other writer who has ventured far into the perilous regions of allegory.

Though there is a large fund of original matter in the Faery Queene, there is also much imitation, and even translation. Various passages from the classics, and still more from the Italian poets, are closely copied. The stores of ancient mythology are freely ransacked; nor is Spenser more careful than his Italian masters in avoiding the incongruity of mixing heathen with christian ideas. To confess the truth, he wrote too much, to write with uniform attention and judgment. His plan was vast; and to fill it up, required great industry as well as invention. He could not afford to be nice in selection; and, like all other composers of very long poems, he was obliged to be contented with such matter as occurred, rather than with such as he would deliberately have approved. Most readers will think he too much abounds in prolix descriptions of single combats, which he found ready drawn to his hand in Bojardo, Ariosto, and Tasso. Indeed, his device of making all the virtues knights errant, necessarily renders their contests with the opposite vices, so many battles.

The form of stanza he adopted (to proceed to the subject of *versification*) favoured redundancy of style; and that, not merely in words, but in ideas. Dryden observes of himself, that a rhyme often helped him to a thought. Spenser's verse, requiring in each stanza four and three similar rhyming terminations, put him upon a perpetual effort to bring in words of a certain sound, however unconnected in their meaning with the current subject. This gave rise to distant associations, which sometimes produced images that really enriched the diction; though more frequently it flattened and debased it by impertinent additions. It likewise often compelled the poet to employ expedients that indicate the cruelty of the yoke to which he had injudiciously subjected himself. Expletives, tautologies, and circumlocutions, occur in almost every stanza, and gross improprieties of speech are but too frequent. Vulgar and obsolete words are often mixed with those of a higher order; and when all these licenses fail in producing the requisite *tale* of rhyme, the writer does not scruple to mis-spell words, and to satisfy the eye at the expense of the ear. Yet the stanza of Spenser, when well executed, has a fulness of melody, and a sonorous majesty, scarcely equalled by any other English measure; and some later poets, who have bestowed due pains upon their versification, have copied it with great success. The concluding Alexandrine, which Spenser added to the eight-line stanza of the Italians, produces a fine effect when it accords with the subject; but in a long piece such a coincidence must frequently be wanting. Every elaborate measure, indeed, has the inconvenience of being ill adapted to the variety of epic composition. It, with difficulty, admits of quick changes and rapid movements, and is apt to produce languor and prolixity. Its frequent recurrence tires the ear; and its marked closes check the flow of eloquence. It has therefore been with true judgment that the best modern heroic poets have deserted the forms of versification which prevailed at the first revival of letters, and have recurred to the simpler models of Greece and Rome.

The *language* of the Faery Queene is cast in a more antique mould than that of the age in which the writer lived. Spenser doubtless thought thereby to throw round his work a venerable air which suited the sober morality of the design, and the antiquity of the manners represented in its action. Many of the words and phrases, too, which even in his day had become obsolete, possessed a peculiar strength and vigour which happily coincided with his own very forcible style of description. It may be added, that, as we have already hinted, by the free employment of words of different ages, he often found means to extricate himself from the difficulties imposed by his system of rhymes. On the whole, however, it is probably best for a writer to confine himself to the current language of his time, and bend his efforts to give it all the perfection of which it is susceptible. In aiming at an antique diction, he will never do more than make a heterogeneous mixture, which is the real language of no one period, and must often appear quaint and affected, rather than simple and nervous. The English of Edward III. was too far distant from that of Elizabeth to admit of an easy combination; and as Spenser could not avoid making the substance of his style of the staple of his own age, the intermingled threads of Chaucer show like spots and stains, rather than agreeable variegations. The effect of his system of language has been, that the Faery Queene cannot safely be quoted as authority for the proper use of words; and that while it is not intelligible to the common reader without a glossary, it affords an uncertain light to the verbal researches of the antiquarian critic.

What has been said may serve as a general introduction to the perusal of this work, which, with all its defects, will ever be considered as one of the capital productions of English poetry, and as conferring high honour on the writer and his country. It will probably not often be *read through;* nor will many think it worth while to bestow much study on its plan, or on the particular signification of all its mysteries and historical allusions. But detached parts will continue to give pleasure after repeated perusals; and the whole will be valued as a rich store-house of invention, resembling some of the remaining edifices of that age, which still astonish by their magnificent profusion of varied, though partly fantastic, ornament.

The other poems of Spenser do not require much discussion, though considerable in quantity, and various in subject. It is to be feared that the leading impression they will make upon a modern reader will be that of tediousness; a fault from which few productions of the early age of English poetry are free. Yet some of these pieces are written in an elevated strain of thought, and exhibit a polish of language and versification which would scarcely be expected from that period. The *Hymns to Love and Beauty* contain many lines that may gratify the nicest ear; and their philosophical and doctrinal learning probably excited great admiration at the time when they were published. The *Sonnets* might have a claim to please those who could taste the studied conceits and far-fetched sentiments of Petrarch. The *Epithalamion*, composed for his own marriage, possesses feeling as well as fancy, and wants only judicious curtailment to make it a very pleasing piece. The *Tears of the Muses* are eloquent complaints, but somewhat too monotonous. They assert with dignity the merits of literature; but it may be supposed, that, like all other censurers of their age, the poet exaggerates in his declamations on the discouragements to which learning was subjected in a reign which we are taught to consider as peculiarly favourable to it. *Daphnaida* is an elegy of most unreasonable length on a person never heard of; and the pastoral strains in which Sir Philip Sidney is lamented, excite much less sympathy, than the simple prose narration of his heroic death. The most remarkable circumstance in this piece is a kind of appendix, written in lines of three iambic feet without rhyme; a form of verse of which I know not another instance. The *Ruins of Time* is a fine idea, inadequately executed. The Roman colony of Verulam was never of consequence enough to be selected as the leading example of change of fortune; and the adulatory lamentation of the death of a private nobleman is unworthy of the high theme of the poem. In the scenery of this piece, Spenser has adopted the ancient notion that the Thames once ran by Verulam; an improbable fable, by which more is lost in point of reality, than is gained in description. The pieces entitled *Colin Clout's come home again*, and *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, refer to character's and events in the court-history of the time, which it would be difficult now to elucidate, should any commentator think the task worth attempting; but they were probably interesting to contemporary readers. The lines already quoted from the latter, describing the miseries of a courtier, yield to few in the language for energy of feeling and nervous brevity of expression.

AN ESSAY

ON

THE POETRY OF

MILTON.

AMONG the names rendered illustrious by intellectual superiority, of which this island justly boasts, a few stand so conspicuously prominent, that they immediately occur to every native whose theme is the glory of his country. Of these, the votaries of science are, perhaps, enumerated with most confidence, because their merits have been equally recognised by foreign nations, and their fame has even been reflected back with additional lustre to their own. In every part of civilised Europe, Bacon and Newton are placed in the first rank of human genius. But the celebrity of men distinguished in the literature of their their country, must not only be originally of home-growth, but must ever have its principal seat at home, as being there alone duly estimated and fully understood. There indeed, it may rise to as great a height as that of the preceding class, and may even excite more general and enthusiastic admiration. Few Englishmen will now make it a question whether Milton be entitled to march in an equal rank with the two philosophers above mentioned; and scarcely any, it is presumed, who have a true relish of English poetry, will assign to him a second place among his poetical brethren. That his fame has been continually growing, and has only within a late period attained its full magnitude, ought to be regarded as a proof of the solidity of its foundation. How might he triumph, could he now behold those who were once his rivals, and even his imagined superiors, fallen far, far beneath him; and his own memory decorated with all the honours which national pride and attachment can bestow! To trace the progress of such a man, and ascertain that peculiarity of excellence which has placed him on such an eminence, cannot but be a highly interesting exercise. At the same time, the task is arduous. I feel it to be such, and engage in it with awe. If it be true, as D'Alembert has said, that no one is fit to estimate a great man, who does not himself belong to the class, how few should venture to sit in judgment on Milton! But I pretend only to give the opinion of a humble individual, whose chief claims are impartiality, and long meditation on the works he means to examine. The chronological order in which I propose to survey them, can scarcely fail of suggesting some striking comparisons of the author with himself at different periods of his life, and of exhibiting that spectacle of the gradual disclosure and growth of genius, which is one of the most captivating to a philosophical inquirer.

From early youth, Milton seems to have been characterised by a lofty and elevated mind. Educated in a distinguished seat of learning, and deeply imbued with the classical literature which at that period, perhaps, was studied with more ardour than it has ever been since, he soared to no common height in his juvenile exercises, and attained an excellence in Latin poetry which is a topic of admiration to his biographers. The intrinsic value of his performances in this class has, indeed, been differently estimated; but it is certain that they bespeak an imagination fed with no trivial or vulgar ideas, and a soul big with high resolves, and the anticipation of future fame. Various passages in his Latin poems have been adduced as denoting the seeds of great designs which then lurked in his mind; but none are more striking than the following lines of an address in English verse "to his Native Language," delivered at a college exercise, when he was nineteen years old:

> Yet I had rather, if I were to chuse,
> Thy service in some graver subject use,
> Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
> Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
> Such where the deep-transported mind may soar
> Above the wheeling poles, and at Heav'n's door
> Look in, and see each blissful deity
> How he before the thund'rous throne doth lie.

These strains plainly indicate the future bard whose "Muse with angels did divide to sing."

Though years before this period he had preluded in English poetry, with some sweet though juvenile verses "On the death of a fair infant dying of a cough," which deserve mention in his poetical progress, as, both from the style and the measure, they show him to have been an early student of Spenser, and prove that he was capable of attaining all those graces of versification in rhymed stanzas, which had been reached by that master.

A very singular composition in his twenty-first year displayed at the same time the grandeur of his genius, and the immaturity of his judgment. It was a HYMN ON THE NATIVITY, the greater part of which is replete with the puerile and unnatural conceit of Donne, and other early English poets;—a school which lastingly perverted Cowley, though a genius worthy of better things; but from the baneful influence of which Milton at length broke loose, like his own Lion at the creation from the incumbent soil. That he possessed the power of thus redeeming himself, might be concluded from several stanzas of this very piece, in which he describes the supposed desertion of the heathen oracles by their inspiring deities, not only with exquisite learning, but with a warmth and purity of painting which he himself scarcely ever surpassed.

Retired to private study, another school of poetry seems to have engaged much of his attention. This was the Italian, at that time beyond comparison the first among the moderns, and, indeed, already the school of Spenser and other English writers of celebrity. The wildness of fancy, united with dignity of sentiment and suavity of expression, which characterised the masters in this school, could not fail of captivating such a mind as that of Milton; accordingly, strong traces of the impressions he received from the poets of Italy are discernible even in his greatest and most mature performances.

No poet, then, ever came to the practice of his art more replenished with stores accumulated from the richest productions of various ages and countries. So copious, indeed, were these materials, that a genius less vigorous would have been in danger of being overwhelmed by them, and of exchanging all originality, for imitation or allusion. Nor can it be denied that his learning is sometimes obtrusive; yet its effect is rather to suggest ideas derived from memory, as from a general stock, than to render him a copyist of particular passages. In this respect a striking difference appears between his manner and that of Tasso, who, inventive as he is in the plan and many of the incidents of his great work, scruples not to introduce long and direct translations from Virgil and other poets. This *originality of imitation* in Milton becomes peculiarly conspicuous on a critical examination of his similes. In most of these he may be detected taking a hint from Homer or some other ancient; but he has made it so much his own, both by added circumstances in the description, and by novelty in the application, that his merit of invention is little less than if the whole idea had been primarily of his own growth. In Milton's mind, all images and impressions, whether received from nature or art, from reading or observation, seem to have been so blended and amalgamated, so much converted into the proper aliment of the intellect, that their transcripts in his writings take a kind of homogeneous form, and what might appear study in another man, in him is spontaneous effusion.

He was twenty-six years old when he produced his MASK OF COMUS, a composition sufficient of itself to raise its author to such a height of reputation, that one greater in extent, rather than in excellence, was alone wanting to place him at the summit of English poetry. Its story, indeed, is simple; its leading idea founded upon ancient mythology; and its conduct and character undramatic, if to a drama it be essential to interest the passions, and give a natural representation of human action and sentiment. But they who have made these objections to it, have not, perhaps, enough considered, that the *Mask*, then a favourite entertainment of a learned age, was regarded as a peculiar species of composition, the nature of which was rather poetical than dramatic, and which sought rather to amuse the fancy with allegorical and mythological fictions, and to elevate the soul with lofty conceptions, than to present scenes of common life. In this view, what work ever fulfilled its purpose more than Comus? Where, in *any* language, can be found such an union of rich description, grand and beautiful imagery, and lofty philosophy, expressed in the noblest diction? How admirable the contrast between the loose morals and seductive painting of the son of Circe, and the virgin purity and severe principles of the Lady! and how carefully has the poet secured the final impression in favour of virtue, not only by the catastrophe, but by the weight of argument, conformably to his own character and the sobriety of the age—an impression too little consulted in the modern alteration of Comus! This poem likewise possesses great beauty of versification, varying from the lightest and gayest anacreontics, to the most majestic and sonorous heroics. On the whole, if an example were required of a work made up of the *very essence of poetry,* perhaps none of equal length in any language could be produced answering this character in so high a degree as the Mask of Comus. Its unfitness for a public stage will be deemed a small objection by one who attributes this unfitness chiefly to its *purity* and its *poetry.* Were it again to be represented on a nobleman's private theatre, a presage might be drawn of the improving taste and morals of the age, which modern *theatricals* (as they are called) are very far from affording.

The ideas in this piece are for the most part derived from classical sources. The mythology is originally Grecian; the philosophy is that of Plato; but it has been justly remarked that in the language and imagery there are various imitations of English poets. Those of Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess" are the most conspicuous; and Spenser and Shakespear may be traced in particular passages. Some critics have, indeed, asserted that Comus is written "in Shakespear's manner." I confess, I cannot discern the resemblance, unless it be in the flow of versification, which has the ease and freedom of that poet's best specimens. In other respects, the strain of poetry is of a more elevated and finished kind than is to be paralleled in Shakespear, except in some short passages. Some peurile conceits are to be found in this fine performance; but they are so few, that on comparing the author with himself at the time of writing his Christmas hymn, he will appear to have improved in judgment no less than in the compass of his poetical powers.

The Allegro and Penseroso appeared shortly after Comus. These are, perhaps, the most popular poems in the English language, and have had the greatest number of imitators. The liveliness, truth, and variety of their imagery accommodate them to the taste of all readers; while the loftier strains to which they sometimes ascend, distinguish them from common descriptive poetry, and administer delight to more select judges. I do not find that Milton has been a borrower in the plan of these pieces, which are exact counterparts to each other, and form two completes pictures. In the *Allegro,* or Cheerful Man, all the images are assembled that are capable of exciting joy and pleasure; and with such felicity are they displayed, that I believe no one ever read it without feeling a temporary exhilaration of soul, like that from an agreeable prospect, or a lively strain of music.

Il Penseroso, or the Thoughtful Contemplative Man, presents, on the contrary, all the images that are adapted to excite, not a black or gloomy melancholy, (which appears to have been the conception of some of its imitators,) but a sublime seriousness, favourable to high fancy and philosophic musing, and in its turn not less grateful to the mind than the former emotion. If, then, the pieces are regarded as opposites, they are so, like day and night, which succeed alternately in the same harmonious system, and gradually shade off into each other. Indeed, the differences presented by the diurnal and nocturnal face of things constitute much of the distinct character of the two pieces; the first of which opens with early dawn, and pursues the course of the sun, while the second commences with evening, and continues till day-break. Both shift the scene from country to town; and in the latter, some of their objects are similar, for the pomp and pageantry of the theatre is introduced into each. In the Allegro, however, the dramatic entertainments are masks and comedies; and it is remarkable, that in conjunction with Jonson, as a comic writer, the poet mentions Shakespear, characterising him as a "child of fancy, warbling his native wood notes;" and thus manifestly alluding to his creations of the imagination, such as the Tempest, the Midsummer Night's Dream, and the Winter's Tale; and passing over his more serious compositions. And when, in the Penseroso, "gorgeous Tragedy" makes its appearance on the scene, its subjects are represented to be those of the ancient Greek tragic theatre, of which Milton was an assiduous student. He hints, it is true, at some modern attempts in this species of the drama, but terms them "rare," and particularises neither the works nor the authors.

It is further observable in these two pieces, that while the personification with which each commences is founded upon classic mythology, some of the most striking imagery in the body of the poems is derived from those gothic fables and popular superstitions with which he had stored his imagination. Both pieces terminate with the *power of music*, to which, numerous passages in his works show him to have been uncommonly sensible. Since musical expression adapts itself to a variety of emotions, there is no incongruity in thus making both his contrasted characters lovers of harmony. Yet if Jessica in Shakespear says rightly

> I'm never merry when I hear sweet music,

which I conceive to be founded on just observation, perhaps, the "Lydian airs," the "linked sweetness long drawn out," and the "melting voice," are somewhat misplaced as the delights of *Mirth*, though they might well belong to *Pleasure*. The true music of Mirth is, indeed, introduced before, in the "merry bells," and "jocund rebecs;" and it is admirably echoed in the light tripping versification of the lines describing the scenes of rural jollity. So happily adapted, indeed, is the measure of L'Allegro to its subject, that we may almost lament that the uniformity of contrast obliged the poet to make use of the same in the Penseroso. Yet, either from the impression made on the mind by the imagery, or from the poet's art in the choice of words, the ear does not seem, on reading the latter piece, to require a verse more concordant with the subject. Milton has generally been represented as not very successful in his management of rhyme; yet I think the English language does not afford many better specimens of the kind than the two pieces before us; in which, though the frequent recurrence of the rhyme has sometimes given rise to a constrained or unmeaning expression, the general flow is easy and natural, and the coincidences of sound and sense are sometimes extremely happy.

Another production of nearly the same period of Milton's life is his LYCIDAS, a monody on the death of a friend. This is a piece of a singular cast and character, and rather adapted to the artificial taste of the academic, than the natural relish of a common reader. Indeed, though it contains much exquisite poetry, which could only have been produced by a genius of the first class, it is liable, as a whole, to many solid objections. The use of pastoral allegory, if to be justified by example, had at that time the practice of all the most eminent poets in its favour. Every occurrence, joyful or sad, on which verse could be demanded, was habitually represented under the mask of rural life, and all the *dramatis personæ* were converted into shepherds and shepherdesses. Sympathy (as Dr. Johnson has well observed) was almost entirely precluded by this abolition of reality; and besides the tiresome uniformity of the fiction, the pastoral imagery could only admit of a very strained and awkward application to the circumstances of courtly and refined society. In one profession, indeed, the allegorical resemblance was favoured by common language, and the *religious pastor* had long been in possession of the character and insignia belonging to a *shepherd* of the flock committed to his charge. It had been found a task of little difficulty to run parallels of considerable length and minuteness between the metaphorical pastoral office, and the real one. Spenser had done this in his "Shepherd's Calendar," though with more perseverance than felicity. Under this disguise, he had spoken more freely than he would probably have otherwise done, against the corruptions of the church. This was an example which Milton would be prompt to imitate, for one of his earliest passions appears to have been zeal for ecclesiastical reform. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the opportunity of uttering bold truths on a delicate and hazardous topic, was a principal inducement with him to adopt the pastoral form on the present occasion. He was, moreover, in this poem to support his reputation as a scholar, and a member of the university of Cambridge, which printed a collection of funereal verses to the memory of the same unfortunate youth, among which Lycidas first appeared. It should be added, that Milton's friendship with the deceased was of the most intimate and affectionate kind; whence real feeling was likely to struggle for expression amid the conceits of poetical fiction. This combination of views and circumstances will account for most of the peculiarities of the performance. Its measure is loose and irregular, well suiting the character of rusticity affixed to the poem, and favourable to the sudden bursts of passion by which it is animated. The ear is occasionally disappointed by missing the expected return of rhyme; yet the general effect is pleasing, and the melody of some of the passages is uncommonly grateful. The form of verse seems borrowed from some of the free strains of Italian poetry, in which Milton was not only a student, but a composer. With respect to the matter, it abounds in classical imitation, as well in the particular images, as in the general style and ordonnance. Its basis is Virgil's eclogue or elegy of "Gallus;" and Theocritus and other Grecian poets have contributed to its learned decorations. The allegorical part, however, is derived from a totally different source; and no judicious critic will defend the incongruous mixture of heathen and christian mythology, which has sprung from the author's double purpose, of displaying his erudition, and taking a part in the theological contentions of the time. Nor can it be denied that the learning of the piece sometimes approaches to pedantry, and has too much the air of academic ostentation. The construction of some of the sentences is likewise harsh and obscure; and the expression of grief is occasionally too playful and artificial to excite sympathy. Yet these faults are compensated by numerous beauties of thought and language; and perhaps no composition of this author more clearly indicates the poet, than his Lycidas.

Soon after the printing of this piece, Milton visited France and Italy; and the view and society of the latter country, then the favourite seat of the Muses, may well be supposed to have fed his poetic enthusiasm; especially, as a patron of the great Tasso, Manso marquis of Villa, honoured him with his notice and praises. His vein of Latin poetry does, indeed, appear to have been refreshed by his travels; and Manso, Diodati, and other foreign friends, were celebrated in new and elegant strains: but as an English poet his voice was doomed to suffer a long suspension, which might seem to preclude all hopes of its revival. On his return to his native country, first the engagements of a private academy, comprising a very extensive plan of education; then, a long and active course of controversy, religious and political; and finally, the office of Latin secretary for state affairs, so much occupied his time and thoughts, that the gentler Muses were deterred from paying their usual visits. During this long period, scarcely any thing fell from his pen worthy the name of poetry, except a few sonnets, written upon incidental topics. In this elaborate species of composition, ill suited to our language and genius, Milton can by no means be reckoned a master. Few of his sonnets exhibit much poetical spirit; none much elegance of versification. Some of them may afford pleasure by their manly cast of thought and vigour of expression; but, on the whole, they contribute nothing to his fame as a poet.

About his 50th year he had the misfortune totally to lose his sight, which had been long in a progress of decay. Of this calamity he felt the full force, as he has evinced by several pathetic passages in his later works. But though he complains that "wisdom was at one inlet quite shut out," it is not probable that his store of poetical imagery incurred any considerable diminution from his loss. He had made a poet's use of his eyes while he possessed them; and he had long enough enjoyed the sense of seeing to be indelibly impressed with all the ideas of beauty and grandeur which it is capable of affording. Not long afterwards, the great national change produced by the Restoration exposed him to personal danger, and for ever blasted all the hopes he might have entertained of an easy and honoured old age. He was indeed, suffered to live quietly, but it was in obscurity and discountenance :—how well deserved, is not here the question ; but this darkness and desolation, these "evil days," as he thought them, were probably the efficient cause of the PARADISE LOST ! He renounced the design of pursuing those tales of chivalry and romance, those heroical, but human topics which had once occupied his poetic meditations ; and he sought his theme, as he did his consolation, in those scriptures which had always been a principal object of his study.

> — — — — — Chief
> Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks beneath,
> That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,
> Nightly I visit. P. L. III. 29.

It was the divine Urania who now cheered his solitude ; and under her inspiration he was satisfied with the consciousness of a more than mortal flight, and with the intelligent applause of an "audience fit, though few." This was the happiest mood for one who was to undertake a performance so great, so novel, so remote from common tastes and examples ; for one who was to resign temporary popularity, in order to make future ages his own.

The number of epic poems which have obtained general and lasting fame is so small, that each is susceptible of being distinctly characterised. The PARADISE LOST is essentially a *theological poem.* Its subject, properly speaking, is not merely that announced in the opening—"Man's first disobedience, and the fruit of the forbidden tree"—but the whole celestial economy, and that train of events which produced the creation of this world, together with the contest between divine benevolence and diabolical malignity in fixing the condition of its inhabitants. The disobedience of man is, indeed, the great incident which the machinery is employed to bring into effect, and which influences all the after-events of the piece ; but the cause of that disobedience is deeply laid in occurrences long anterior and of higher importance, involving the fate and actions of beings infinitely superior to the human. It is in this part alone that Milton appears as an *inventor ;* for his deference to the authority of the sacred writings has restrained him, in relating the history or allegory of the fall of man, from making any considerable additions to the original narration. It is, therefore, a peculiarity of this poem, that what in others is called the *machinery,* and is no more than an ornamental adjunct, or, at most, an occasional auxiliary, is, in this, the main subject. For although the fate of the human personages is the point on which the interest is concentrated, the agents in its determination are superhuman beings, on whom all the proper *action* of the fable depends, and whose powers and characters are the principal objects of the reader's curiosity.

But since it is impossible for a man to form any idea of moral or intellectual qualities which is not primarily derived from human nature, these beings of poetical creation must, after all, be essentially *men ;* and their discriminating characters can be no other than compounds of such qualities as we see existing among ourselves, exalted, perhaps, in degree, but substantially the same. To the best and most perfect of beings we can assign only such virtue and such wisdom as our experience of mankind has brought to our acquaintance; and we can give no other features of vice and depravity to the worst, than such as we have viewed in our fellow-creatures. Further, even the external figures of beauty and deformity in our imaginations, must be mere transcripts of pictures already formed by our senses. We can compound differently from what nature has done; we can aggrandise and diminish ; but we can form no truly original conceptions. And as the strongest impressions, both agreeable and disgusting, have been made upon us by beings in the human shape, there is no other which we can so happily associate with moral character.

All poets, therefore, from Homer to his latest successors, who have intermixed *machinery* with their fables, have done no more than superinduce a set of agents really *human,* though distinguished by a different local residence, and by the possession of powers and attributes which in man would be called supernatural. The grossness of the heathen mythology even caused the celestial personages to fall below the human, in all that constitutes real dignity of nature. The divinities of Homer and Virgil are distinguished by nothing so much as bad passions, and an insatiable appetite for doing mischief; and the heroes of those poets are much more estimable than the gods. Milton's system, as it was infinitely superior to theirs in a moral view, so it was more favourable to poetical effect. By dividing his spiritual beings into the two great classes of good and bad, he was able to keep their character and agency perfectly distinct, and to exhibit opposite moral qualities in all their strength and purity. At the same time, by assigning to each class a community of natural powers, he produced that kind of balance which was requisite to throw any interest upon scenes in which they should be opposed to each other. A difficulty however occurred, which it was impossible entirely to surmount, and which, in fact, forms the chief defect of the plan of Paradise Lost. The transcendent excellence of the Supreme Being in the Jewish and Christian systems, to which Milton has most religiously adhered, places him so much beyond all parallel in respect to power and dignity, and renders him so indubitably the master of all events, that the ambiguity of success which might be preserved in a mere contention between angelic beings, similar in power, though opposite in character, is entirely destroyed, when the good are represented as the immediate delegates and ministers of the Deity, and aided by his resistless might. Homer could make even Jupiter himself subject to the decrees of Fate; but the God of Milton is the creator of fate, the original planner and sovereign disposer of every occurrence. It is not, however, the philosophical difficulty of an intermixture of evil in a world created by infinite power and infinite goodness, which *peculiarly* presses upon our poet; but it is the contest which he imagines between the partisans and the adversaries of the Supreme Being. The latter of these, though in their pristine state admitted to a direct view and comprehension of the divine majesty, must yet be supposed to have entertained the absurd idea of effectual resistance to his will; while the former, firm in their faith, and confident in the matchless power of their great Lord, have no room left for the exertion of those virtues which most inspire esteem and admiration. Hence, although the original revolt of Satan and his party is an act of madness, for which an adequate motive can scarcely be conceived, yet in the subsequent transactions, every display of the qualities which can be termed *heroical* necessarily belong to them. Courage to dare, fortitude to endure, perseverance and self devotion in the chief, tried fidelity in the followers, are only to be found among those who contend under circumstances of known danger and difficulty, and struggle with misfortune and discomfiture. The Son, moving on to sure victory, armed with all the terrors of his Father's majesty, is indeed a most awful and sublime figure; but Satan, taking upon himself an enterprise full of toil and hazard, which had made the boldest of his chiefs to shudder, and regarding his exalted station only as a call to higher exertions for the general advantage, is a real hero. Nor can we withhold a sentiment of applause and sympathy for that fallen host which

> — — — — — faithful stood
> Their glory wither'd;

and in the midst of "fierce pains," prided themselves in obedience to their great leader.

It must then, I think, be allowed that Paradise Lost really labours under the defect which has been charged upon it, that of engaging the high passions at the commencement of the poem in favour of the cause it is meant to condemn. Yet the art of the poet in counteracting this impression, by assigning a perpetual superiority in point of sanctity and purity of sentiment to the angelic host, and making the devils themselves depose, as it were, in testimony of the justice as well as the power of that Being against whom they have revolted, is eminently conspicuous. It may be added, that in proportion as the fate of the human persons of the fable becomes more interesting, the diabolical machinations against them excite more detestation; and that Satan and his crew at length lose all their grandeur, and sink into equal contempt and abhorence. It is true, this change is the cause that the latter books fall extremely short of the earlier in sublimity; and that the reader's interest, which undoubtedly at the commencement is placed upon the contest in heaven, is finally transferred to a totally different scene, and to new actors.

The field in which the imagination of Milton freely expatiates is the extra-mundane system, the regions of heaven, hell, and chaos. In describing and peopling these scenes, he has displayed a force and sublimity of conception which no poet has ever equalled. He has expanded our ideas to the utmost limits of possibility; and has filled the fancy with things new and strange, many of which, painted by an inferior artist, would have formed only grotesques, but under the touch of his genius become pictures of unparalleled grandeur. It cannot, however, be affirmed that his success is every where alike; for while his view of the infernal mansions, his council in Pandemonium, and his Satanic voyage, are replete with the true sublime in imagery and sentiment, his battle between the faithful and the revolted angels is puerile and full of inconsistencies. Scenes of combat are grand in human action, because they call forth exertions of the soul, which, however mischievous in their effects, we cannot help admiring; but, transferred to immortal and nearly impassive beings, they become mere child's play. They resemble those engagements of Italian mercenaries in complete armour, in which, after half a day's fighting, scarcely any other mischief was done, than unhorsing some of the combatants, and trampling them in the dirt. That the sixth book of Paradise Lost should have been the subject of so much admiration, must be attributed to an artificial taste formed by the works of Homer and his imitators, which gave to deeds of arms the first place among the splendid incidents of epic poetry. Yet there are in it many detached passages of great excellence, and the diction is highly animated and poetical.

If the sublimity of Milton's genius is chiefly displayed in his flight to regions beyond human ken, its elegance and beauty are most conspicuous where he descends to earth, and paints the first pair of mankind in that delicious Paradise which was the happy abode of their innocence. Nothing can be more admirable than the art with which he has allied all the tender softness and even the voluptuousness of the Italian school, with the purity and sanctity of a religious record. Descriptions so charming to the sense were never before joined to sentiments so dignifying to the soul. It must, however, be observed, that the features of character he has given to Adam and Eve do not altogether accord with that simplicity which might be expected in beings newly created, and whose minds must be totally unpractised in abstract reasoning and reflection. Adam, in particular, exhibits a fund of moral wisdom which in him could not possibly be the acquisition of experience; and the manner in which he is affected with what he beholds in reality or vision, is by no means that of one who views objects for the first time. This prematurity of understanding, however, seems in a certain degree necessary in order to render them actors in the scenes in which they are engaged; indeed, the very use of speech in them supposes a faculty acquired differently from the common mode of practice and instruction. The Rabbins have assigned to the first man perfect knowledge of all arts and sciences. Milton has been contented with representing him as possessed of strong sense and ready apprehension; and though, philosophically speaking, there may be as much error in his conception of the character, as in that of the Rabbins, yet he will scarcely be found to have exceeded the license which the construction of his fable demanded. As the scriptural account of the temptation and fall, to which Milton has literally adhered, was not sufficient to fill up the measure of an epic poem, he has enlarged the field of human action, by a proleptical view of the leading events which were to attend the descendants of Adam, communicated in vision or narration through the ministry of the angel Michaël. For this kind of anticipation he had an example and authority in the practice of several of his predecessors; and he has employed it with the happiest effect. The pictures of peace and war, of the deluge, and of the patriarchal life, are scarcely to be surpassed by any scenes of descriptive poetry, and they contribute to sustain the interest of the piece, which, after the great catastrophe of the fall, would otherwise be apt to languish. For though Milton seems to have considered the purely theological part of his work as the most important, and to have expected that his elaborate argumentations concerning free-will, grace, justification, atonement, and the like, would engage the attention of the religious reader, it may safely be affirmed that Paradise Lost would long ago have been consigned to oblivion, had these been its only topics. And it is undoubtedly the large admixture of passages in which

> God the Father turns a school divine,

that justifies the assertion, that it is a poem "more praised than read;" and that few who sit down to *read it through* do not find it a task of which they grow somewhat weary before it is accomplished. But, in reality, long compositions in poetry are seldom re-perused in their whole extent; and the reader, whose curiosity with respect to the plan and termination is already gratified, usually contents himself afterwards with recurring to favourite passages of distinguished excellence. Of such passages, what piece can boast more than Paradise Lost; and whither can the exhausted mind resort with surer success, to renovate itself with those high ideas and enthusiastic sensations, which it is the prerogative of poetry to excite in so superior a degree?

The style of this poem is in some measure characteristic of its nature and subject. With the severe and even naked simplicity of primitive language, it unites every figurative form that can give elevation and dignity to speech, and that uncommon construction and use of words which impresses the stamp of erudition. It is, indeed, to be observed, that Milton's prose is formed upon a like imitation of the languages of antiquity; and this taste seems to have grown upon him as he advanced in years. Perhaps, a sense of the increasing weight and importance of his subjects led him to clothe his thoughts in terms more remote from vulgar use. It is certain, likewise, that the example of the ancient poets themselves, particularly Virgil and his followers, sanctioned the practice of employing antiquated words and the anomalies of diction, in order to establish a characteristic difference between the styles of poetry and prose. The annotators on Milton seem in general to have regarded as peculiar beauties his learned forms of phraseology and foreign senses; and many of his imitators appear to have thought that in these particulars consisted the essence of *Miltonic diction.* I confess it, however, to be my opinion that his taste really suffered from the barbarism of a controversial age, in the disputes of which he had borne so conspicuous a part; and that, although his poetical genius had been wonderfully preserved amid the wreck of elegant literature, his delicate perception of beauty and propriety in expression had been somewhat impaired since the golden days of his Comus.

With respect to the versification of Paradise Lost, it is justly considered as exhibiting the whole compass of harmony and variety of which blank verse is capable. No poet seems to have possessed a more musical ear than Milton; and as well in the simple melody of varied pauses, as in the adaptation of sounds to particular expressions, he displays all the power of a master. At the same time, it must be allowed that his long work abounds with instances of violations of the common rules of measure, which would scarcely be tolerated in an inferior writer. Of these, however, a part are to be imputed to design; the irregularity or defect being manifestly accommodated to the meaning: and the judgment of the poet in such cases has been sanctioned by the admiration of critics and imitators. A much greater number are merely the products of haste and negligence; of a mind too much absorbed by serious contemplations to attend to the niceties of position; and pouring forth unpremeditated strains, which the ferver of his temper, joined with his bodily infirmity, did not permit him to elaborate into perfection. These may well be excused, but it is prejudice or false taste to admire them; and they who have made Milton's negligences an apology for their own indolence or carelessness, should have reflected that when faults are tolerated, it is in consideration of a decided preponderancy of excellencies.

After the attention bestowed upon Paradise Lost, few remarks will suffice respecting PARADISE REGAINED. This poem, whether it be ranked among the epic or heroic, is in reality a kind of after piece, springing rather from the theological than the poetical conception of the great work above mentioned. This idea of it is confirmed by the history of its origin, which was from the suggestion of the quaker Elwood, who seems to have thought the poet's task incomplete, till he should have rounded his system by adding a Paradise *Found* to a Paradise *Lost*. Its subject is a single event in the history of Christ; his temptation by Satan in the wilderness: and it is very remarkable, that in Milton's divinity the triumph of the Son of God on this occasion should be considered as of itself completing the redemption of mankind, and being the efficient cause of the recovery of Paradise. The commentators suppose that he adopted this notion, for the sake of contrasting that *disobedience* of Adam which caused him to yield to temptation, with the *obedience* of Christ, which enabled him to resist it. But whatever be thought of the soundness of Milton's theology in this point, his poetical judgment may justly be called in question: for, the Temptation forms so inconsiderable a part of that eventful history of the life and actions of the founder of the Christian religion, which is indelibly impressed upon the memory of every reader of the scriptures, that it is impossible the mind can be satisfied with a narration of it given as a whole, and made a kind of parallel to the splendid story of Paradise Lost. The awful words, *It is finished*, will never by a Christian be taken from the solemn catastrophe of the death of his Saviour, and be applied to the completion of his first trial.

The Temptation, however, considered as a single scene of the great drama, possesses that character of the marvellous, which renders it not unsuitable for poetry. It is true, there is less action in it than discourse; and Milton's reverence for the original records would not permit him to make any material addition to the circumstances; yet he has happily intermixed with the dialogue, which forms the chief matter of the piece, as great a variety of description as the subject would afford. It perhaps had been better for him to have avoided any community of poetical fiction with the Paradise Lost, since it was not likely that his fancy should again soar to the sublime heights it had reached in that poem. Thus, the consultation among the infernal powers which forms the *machinery* of Paradise Regained, is so faint a copy of Pandemonium, and Satan and his chiefs appear in it with a lustre so diminished, that the character of an inferior production is at once fixed in the reader's mind. Without such a parallel, Paradise Regained might well sustain itself, as a work abounding in excellent reasoning and sentiment, and containing many pleasing sketches of natural scenery. There are even parts in which the Miltonic genius displays itself in all the vigour of its best days; nor do I know any passages in all the works of this great poet to which a reader may oftener recur with fresh delight, than those in which *bird's-eye* views are painted of the three capitals, Ctesiphon, Rome, and Athens. It is impossible for learning more happily to aid the imagination, than it has done in suggesting the characteristic features by which these places are distinguished and contrasted; and the pen never more perfectly fulfilled the task of the pencil than in these living descriptions. On the whole, though Paradise Regained was justly regarded by the public as a falling-off from the majesty of Paradise Lost, yet it is a piece which Milton only could have written, and bears all the peculiar marks of his master hand. Tradition says that it was his own favourite work, and this circumstance has been adduced as a proof of the incompetency of a writer to judge of his own performances. But is probable that Milton, in this case, judged rather as a theologian than as a poet; and having with much art contrived to introduce all the leading doctrines of Christianity into this piece, he considered it as the consummation of a grand scheme, and measured its value by the importance of its subject.

There remains to speak of the only tragedy composed by Milton, his Samson Agonistes, also the work of this declining period of his life. We are not to conceive of Milton as a writer for a modern stage. His own taste, and that of the public at his time, with respect to dramatic compositions, were formed upon totally different principles; nor could his name and character be expected to obtain favour for him in an English theatre. He, therefore, did not think it worth while to adapt his Samson for the stage; whence it appears without any division into acts and scenes. His idea of tragedy was entirely derived from Grecian models, which he has finely characterised in the following lines:

> Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
> In Chorus or Iambic, teachers best
> Of moral prudence, with delight received
> In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
> Of Fate, and Chance, and change in human life,
> High actions and high passions best describing.
> *Par. Reg.* iv. 261.

It is this strain of moral precept and sententious remark which he has chosen for his imitation; and he has chosen as their vehicle a story simple in its texture, affording neither the intricacies of plot, nor the play of violent passions. Indeed, as Milton's knowledge of mankind appears to have been drawn more from books than from personal observation, and to have consisted rather in general propositions than particular facts, he was little qualified to paint the genuine language of passion, or to trace the workings of the affections through all the windings of the heart. But what he attempted, he well performed. He gave a closet drama, replete with admirable maxims of prudence and morality, public and private; containing, indeed, few passages of high poetry, but many sentences of strong and nervous expression, excellently fitted to dwell upon the memory, and to make a part of that store of true philosophy which, in a well-furnished mind, lies ready for the uses of life. The most pathetic part of this piece is Samson's lamentation for his blindness, in which the poet copied from his own sensations. The scene with Harapha is spirited; and the description of the final catastrophe has the colouring of a master. It is observable, that though the form of the composition is Grecian, the manners and sentiments are purely Hebrew, in strict conformity to the scene and persons. It has been invidiously suggested, that Milton chose the story of Samson for the opportunity it gave him of satirising bad wives. I should rather imagine, that the assertion of pure religion, and the resistance of tyrannical power, were the chief circumstances which gave him a predilection for this fable; though it must be acknowledged that here, as well as in his Paradise Lost, he holds extremely high the authority of a husband, and represents the female sex as objects of caution and suspicion to a wise man.

Such, in a compendious view, are the *Poems of Milton*, the richest treasure of the kind our language possesses, unless an exception be pleaded for the works of Shakespeare. But although these abound in passages of the noblest poetry, yet their distinguishing merit is of another kind. It is the insight into the human heart, and the delineation of all its passions and affections, which place Shakespeare beyond all competition among his brother dramatists. In pure poetry, his flights, though lofty, are short and wavering; while Milton, upborne by the combined powers of native genius and unremitting study, elevated by all that can give force and dignity to the mind, holds on a steadfast course, which knows no limits but those impassable by the human intellect.

AN ESSAY
ON
THE HEROIC POEM
OF
GONDIBERT.

A PERSON engaged in the pursuit of literary fame must be severely mortified on observing the very speedy neglect into which writers of high merit so frequently fall. The revolution of centuries, the extinction of languages, the vast convulsions which agitate a whole people, are causes which may well be submitted to in overwhelming an author with oblivion; but that in the same country, with little variation of language or manners, the delights of one age should become utter strangers in the next, is surely an immaturity of fate which conveys reproach upon the inconsistency of national taste. That noble band, the English Poets, have ample reason for complaining to what unjust guardians they have entrusted their renown. While we crown the statue of Shakespeare as the prince of dramatic poets, shall we forget the works, and almost the names, of his contemporaries who possessed so much of a kindred spirit? Shall the Italian *Pastor Fido* and *Amynta* stand high in our estimation, and the *Faithful Shepherdess*, the most beautiful pastoral that a poet's fancy ever formed, be scarcely known amongst us? Shall we feel the fire of heroic poetry in translations from Greece and Rome, and never search for it in the native productions of our own country?

The capital work of *Sir William D'avenant*, which I now desire to call forth from its obscurity, may well be considered as in a state of oblivion, since we no where meet with allusions to it, or quotations from it, in our modern writers; and few, I imagine, even of the professed students in English classics, would think their taste discredited by confessing that they had never read Gondibert. A very learned and ingenious critic, in his well-known *Discourse upon Poetical Imitation*, has, indeed, taken notice of this poem ; but though he bestows all due praise upon its author, yet the purpose for which it is mentioned being to instance an essential error, we cannot suppose that his authority has served to gain it more readers. Having very judiciously laid it down as a general observation, that writers by studiously avoiding the fancied disgrace of imitation are apt to fall into improper methods, forced conceits, and affected expression ; he proceeds to introduce the work in question after the following manner: "And, that the reader may not suspect me of asserting this without experience, let me exemplify what has been here said in the case of a very eminent person, who, with all the advantages of art and nature that could be required to adorn the true poet, was ruined by this single error. The person I mean was Sir William D'Avenant, whose *Gondibert* will remain a perpetual monument of the mischiefs which must ever arise from this affectation of originality in lettered and polite poets."

A considerable degree of deference is undoubtedly due to a critic of such acknowledged taste and abilities ; yet, since it appears to me that in this instance he writes under the influence of system and learned prejudice, I shall venture to canvass the principles upon which he supports his censure.

The *method* of Gondibert is first objected to by Dr. Hurd, and upon two accounts. First, that the compass of the poem is contracted from the limits of the ancient epic, to those of the dramatic form ; and by this means, pursuing a close accelerated plot, the opportunity is lost of introducing digressive ornaments, and of giving that minuteness of description which confers an air of reality. Now, since the author sets out with disavowing the common rules of epic poetry, it is certainly unjust to try him by those rules. That effects are not produced which he never designed to produce, can be no matter of blame ; we have only to examine the justness of the design itself. It is wrong to expect incompatible qualities as well in compositions as in men. A work cannot at the same time possess force and diffusiveness, rapidity and minuteness.

Every one who has read Homer with prejudice, will, I doubt not, confess that the effects which should result from the great events of the story are much broken and impeded by that very minuteness of description, and frequency of digression, which D'avenant is blamed for rejecting. The mind, warmed by an interesting narration, either in history, poetry, or romance, requires the writer to keep up with its exertions, and cannot bear him to flag in his pace, or turn aside in pursuit of other objects. The proper end of epic poetry, according to Dr. Hurd, is *admiration*. This, I imagine, would by no means have been allowed by our author, who seems rather to have placed it in interesting the passions, inculcating noble sentiments, and informing the understanding. Nor does it answer the idea of Horace, who praises Homer for his moral lessons, for teaching

> —— quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non.

However, a due limitation of subject, and something of rapidity in pursuing it, appear very necessary to the production of a considerable effect of what kind soever; and a pompous display of foreign circumstances must always debilitate more than adorn. It appears an extremely bad compliment to an epic poem, to say that its chief beauty lies in the episodes. Indeed, epic poetry as existing in the models of antiquity, or their copies, by no means, I think, deserves the title given by critics, of the highest species of poetical composition. The tedious compass of the subject, the necessity of employing so large a share of the work in the relation of trifling occurrences for the sake of connection, and the frequency of interruptions from collateral matter, inevitably cause both the poet's exertions and the reader's attention to intermit; and it is no wonder that Homer and Virgil, too, sometimes nod over their labours. The author of Gondibert seems to have been sensible of these inconveniences, and, upon fair comparison of the epic and dramatic form, to have preferred the latter as capable of more spirit, and uniform dignity. We shall find, however, in reviewing the poem, that he has by no means restricted himself so narrowly as to preclude all ornamental deviations; and though they may not deserve the title of episodes, yet in his short and unfinished piece, they have all the desirable effect of a pleasing variety.

The second objection which Dr. Hurd brings against the *method* of this poem, is the rejection of all supernatural agency, or what constitutes the *machinery* of the ancient epic poem. But, for this, the critic himself offers a vindication, when he commends the author for not running into the wild fables of the Italian romancers, "which had too slender a foundation in the serious belief of his age to justify a relation to them." Now by making this *belief* an essential rule of propriety with respect to the machinery, an author in an enlightened period, such as that of D'avenant, is, in effect, prohibited from its use altogether; for the abstracted nature of a pure and philosophical religion renders it utterly unfit for the purposes of poetical fiction. The works of such Christian poets as have attempted to form a system of machinery upon the ideas of saints, angels, and tutelary spirits, will sufficiently prove that their religion, even with a mixture of popular superstition, was ill calculated to assist their imagination. Two writers, whom one would little expect to meet upon the same ground, Sir Richard Blackmore and Voltaire, have given instances of the same faulty plan in this respect; and nothing in the good Knight's epic labours can more deserve the attack of ridicule, than the divine mission in the Henriade for instructing his Majesty in the sublime mysteries of transubstantiation.

It was a very just charge which Plato brought against Homer, that he had greatly contributed to debase religion by the unworthy and absurd representations he has given of the celestial beings, both with respect to their power and their justice; and this is a fault which the poet must always in some measure be guilty of when he too familiarly mixes divine agency with human events. Nor does it appear more favourable to the greatness of the human personages, that they are on all occasions so beholden to the immediate interposition of divine allies. The refined and judicious Virgil, though he has tolerably kept up the dignity of his Deities, has yet very much lowered his heroes from this cause. When we see Æneas, the son of a Goddess, aided by a God, and covered with celestial armour, with difficulty vanquishing the gallant Turnus, we conclude that without such odds the victory must have fallen on the other side. Under such a system of supernatural agency, there was no other way of exalting a man than making him, like Diomed, war against the Gods, or like Cato, approve a cause which they had unjustly condemned. Surely a "*sober* intermixture of religion" can never be attributed to the ancient epic. The poem of Gondibert is, indeed, without all this mixture of religious machinery, whether it be termed sober or extravagant. Human means are brought to accomplish human ends; and Cowley, in his recommendatory lines prefixed to the work, has thus expressed his approbation of this part of the plan:

Methinks heroick poesie till now
Like some fantastique fairy-land did show;
Gods, Devils, Nymphs, Witches, and Giants' race,
And all but Man in man's best work had place.
Thou, like some worthy Knight, with sacred arms
Dost drive the Monster's thence, and end the charms:
Instead of these dost Men and Manners plant,
The things which that rich soil did chiefly want.

We shall see hereafter that the author has not neglected to introduce *religious sentiment*, and that of a more noble and elevated kind than can easily be paralleled in poetry.

But as the poet, in the critic's opinion, did too much in banishing every thing supernatural in the events, so he did too little in retaining the fantastic notions of love and honour in the characters of his piece, which were derived from the same source of fiction and romance. There is, however, an essential difference between the cases. Artificial sentiments, however unnatural at first, may, from the operation of particular causes, become so familiar as to be adopted into the manners of the age. Instances of fashion in sentiment are almost as frequent as of fashion in dress. It is certain that the romantic ideas of love and honour did in fact prevail in a high degree during a considerable period of the later ages, owing to causes which the same ingenious critic has, in a very curious manner, investigated in his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance.* They gave the leading tone to all polished manners; and gallantry was as serious a principle in the Italian courts, as love to their country in the states of Greece or old Rome. Supernatural agency in human events, on the other hand, however commonly pretended, or firmly believed, would never approach one step nearer to reality. After all, the author of Gondibert could not intend to reduce his poem to mere history; but he chose to take a poetical license in the dignity and elevation of his sentiments, rather than in the marvelousness of its events. He thought he might attribute to the exalted personages of courts and camps the same nobleness of mind which himself, a courtier and a soldier, possessed. If his work be allowed less grand and entertaining from the want of such ornaments as those of his predecessors are decorated with, it will yet be difficult to show how, at his time, they could have been applied consistently with good sense and improved taste.

So much in vindication of the general *method* of Sir W. D'avenant's poem. With respect to its *execution*, the justice of

Dr. Hurd's censure cannot be controverted. That his sentiments are frequently far-fetched and affected, and his expression quaint and obscure, is but too obviously apparent; and these faults, together with the want of harmony in versification will sufficiently account for the neglect into which the work is fallen, though interesting in its story, and thick sown with beauties. Readers who take up a book merely for the indolent amusement of a leisure hour, cannot endure the labour of unharbouring a fine thought from the cover of perplexed expression. The pleasure arising from a flowing line or a rounded period is more engaging to them, because more easily enjoyed, than that from a sublime or witty conception. The author's faulty *execution*, however, arose from a source directly contrary to the "dread of imitation." Imitation itself led him to it; for almost all the models of polite literature existing in his own country, and indeed in the other polished nations of Europe, were characterised by the very same vitiation of taste. Among our own writers it is sufficient to instance Donne, Suckling and Cowley for this constant affectation of wit and uncommon sentiment, and for a consequent obscurity of expression. Yet all these, and Sir W. D'avenant, perhaps, in a more eminent degree than the rest, had for great occasions, above the temptation of trifling, a majestic and nervous simplicity both of sentiment and expression; which, with our more refined taste and language, we have never been able to equal.

I should now hope that the reader would set out with me upon a nearer inspection of this poem, with the general idea of its being the work of an elevated genius, pregnant with a rich store of free and noble sentiment, fashioned by an intimate commerce with the great world, and boldly pursuing an original but not an unskilful plan.

The measure chosen for this poem is that which we now almost confine to elegy. This choice does not appear very judicious; for although our elegiac stanza possesses a strength and fulness which renders it not unsuitable to heroic subjects, yet in a piece of considerable length, every returning measure must become tiresome from its frequent repetitions. And this is not the worst effect of returning stanzas, in a long work. The necessity of comprising a sentence within the limits of the measure is the tyranny of Procrustes to thought. For the sake of a disagreeable uniformity, expression must constantly be cramped or extenuated. In general the latter expedient will be practised, as the easiest; and thus both sentiment and language will be enfeebled by unmeaning expletives. This, indeed, in some measure is the effect of rhyme couplets; and still more of the Latin hexameter and pentameter. In our author, a redundancy of thought, running out into parentheses, seems to have been produced, or at least encouraged, by the measure. But I think he has generally preserved a force and majesty of expression.

It would have been highly injudicious for one who has rejected all poetical machinery, to have begun his poem with the ancient form of invoking a Muse. Indeed, in all modern writers this invocation appears little better than an unmeaning ceremony, practised by rote from ancient custom; and very properly makes a part of the *receipt for an epic poem* humourously laid down after the exact model of mechanical imitation, in the Spectator. Our author, with simple and unaffected dignity, thus opens at once into his subject:

Of all the Lombard's, by their trophies known,
  Who sought fame soon, and had her favour long,
King Aribert best seem'd to fill the throne,
  And bred most business for heroic song.

This conquering monarch, we are soon acquainted, was blest with an only child, the heroine of the story,

Recorded Rhodalind! whose high renown
  Who miss in books not luckily have read;
Or vex'd with living beauties of their own
  Have shunn'd the wise records of lovers dead.

Descriptions of female beauty have engaged the powers of poets in every age, who have exhausted all nature for imagery to heighten their painting; yet the picture has ever been extremely faint and inadequate. Our poet judiciously confines his description of Rhodalind to the qualities of her mind, contenting himself with general praises, though in the high-flown gallantry of the times, of her personal charms.

Her looks like empire shew'd, great above pride;
  Since pride ill counterfeits excessive height:
But nature publish'd what she fain would hide,
  Who for her deeds, not beauty, lov'd the light.

To make her lowly mind's appearance less,
  She us'd some outward greatness for disguise;

Esteem'd as pride the cloyst'ral lowliness,
And thought them proud who even the proud despise.

Oppressors big with pride, when she appear'd
Blush'd, and believ'd their greatness counterfeit;
The lowly thought they them in vain had fear'd;
Found virtue harmless, and nought else so great.

Her mind (scarce to her feeble sex a-kin)
Did as her birth, her right to empire show;
Seem'd careless outward when employ'd within;
Her speech, like lovers watch'd, was kind and low.

The court of Aribert could not want men of high rank and accomplishments to pay their devotions at such a shrine. Amongst these, "Oswald the Great and greater Gondibert" moved in the most exalted sphere of renown. These noble personages are characterised and contrasted with so masterly a hand that it would be an injury not to transcribe the whole.

In court Prince Oswald costly was and gay,
Finer than near vain kings their fav'rites are;
Outshin'd bright fav'rites on their nuptial day;
Yet were his eyes dark with ambitious care.

Duke Gondibert was still more gravely clad,
But yet his looks familiar were and clear;
As if with ill to others never sad,
Nor tow'rds himself could others practise fear.

The Prince could porpoise like in tempests play,
And in court storms on shipwreck'd greatness feed;
Not frighted with their fate when cast away,
But to their glorious hazards durst succeed.

The Duke would lasting calms to courts assure,
As pleasant gardens we defend from winds;
For he who bus'ness would from storms procure,
Soon his affairs above his manage finds.

Oswald in throngs the abject people sought
With humble looks; who still too late will know
They are ambition's quarry, and soon caught
When the aspiring eagle stoops so low.

The Duke did these by steady virtue gain;
Which they in action more than precept taste;
Deeds shew the good, and those who goodness feign
By such even though their vizards are outfac't.

Oswald in war was worthily renown'd;
Though gay in courts; coarsely in camps could live;
Judg'd danger soon, and first was in it found:
Could toil to gain what he with ease did give.

Yet toils and dangers through ambition lov'd,
Which does in war the name of virtue own;
But quits that name when from the war remov'd,
As rivers theirs when from their channels gone.

The Duke (as restless as his fame in war)
With martial toil could Oswald weary make,
And calmly do what he with rage did dare,
And give so much as he might deign to take.

Him as their founder cities did adore;
The court he knew to steer in storms of state;
In fields a battle lost he could restore,
And after force the victors to their fate.

Of these great rivals, Gondibert was he whom the king had destined for his son-in-law, and the heir of his throne; and Rhodalind, too, in the privacy of her own breast, had made the same choice. This is related in a manner little inferior to Shakespeare's famous description of concealed love.

Yet sadly it is sung that she in shades
Mildly as mourning doves love's sorrows felt;
Whilst in her secret tears her freshness fades,
As roses silently in lymbecks melt.

Gondibert, however, though of a nature by no means unsusceptible of the tender passion, had not as yet felt it for a particular object; and Oswald, who stood forth as the public suitor to the princess, was incited by no other motive than ambition Not Rhodalind herself (says the Poet)

Could he affect but shining in her throne.

His cause was powerfully pleaded with the princess by his sister Gartha, with whom we are next brought acquainted. A bold, full, majestic beauty; and a corresponding mind, high, restless, and aspiring, are her distinguishing features. The Prince and Duke were urged on to ambitious pursuits by their respective armies, which, just returned from conquest, lay encamped, the one at Brescia, and the other at Bergamo. That of Gondibert was composed of hardy youth whom he had selected from his father's camp, and educated in martial discipline under his own inspection. Temperance, chastity, vigilance, humanity, and all the high virtues of chivalry, remarkably distinguish these young soldiers from those of later times. Beauty, indeed, commanded no less regard amongst them than in a modern camp; but it was an object of passion, and not of appetite; and was the powerful engine in their education which inspired them with noble and exalted sentiments. This is an idea on which our author, true to the principles of chivalry, very frequently enlarges, and always with peculiar force and dignity. In the present instance it is thus finely expressed:

> But though the Duke taught rigid discipline,
> He let them beauty thus at distance know;
> As priests discover some more sacred shrine,
> Which none must touch, yet all to it may bow.
>
> When thus as suitors mourning virgins pass
> Through their clean camp, themselves in form they draw,
> That they with martial reverence may grace
> Beauty, the stranger, which they seldom saw.
>
> They vayl'd their ensigns as it by did move,
> Whilst inward, as from native conscience, all
> Worship'd the poet's darling god-head, Love;
> Which grave philosophers did Nature call.

Indeed, the influence of this passion in its purest and most exalted state, during the course of education, is a subject that might, perhaps, shine as much in the hands of a moralist as of a poet.

The soldiers of Oswald were his father's brave veterans, in whose arms he had been bred. The story thus opened, and our attention awakened to the expectation of important events, the first canto is closed.

The second canto introduces us to a solemn annual hunting, held by Duke Gondibert in commemoration of a great victory gained on this day by his grandsire. His train was adorned by many gallant and noble persons, the friends of his family, and commanders in his army. The hunting, which is described with much poetical spirit, terminates in a combat As Gondibert and his party are returning weary homeward, an ancient ranger hastily brings the tidings that Oswald, who had lain in ambush with a body of chosen horse, is advancing upon them. The Duke, rejecting all counsels of flight, prepares to receive his foes; and with an account of their principal leaders, and the order of their march, the canto concludes.

A parley between the chiefs now succeeds, in which the character of each is well preserved. Oswald warmly accuses his rival for usurping his claims on the princess and the kingdom. Gondibert defends himself with temper, and disavows all ambitious designs. The other disdains accommodation; and the conference ends in a generous agreement to decide their differences in single fight.

When every thing is prepared for the combat, Hubert, the brother of Oswald, steps forth with a general challenge to the opposite party. This is instantly accepted, and serves for a prelude to so many others, that a general engagement seems likely to ensue; when Oswald reproves their disobedient ardour: and, upon Hubert's insisting to share his fate from the rights of brotherhood, it is at length decided that three persons of each party should enter the lists along with their generals. The duel then comes on, in the fourth canto; in which Oswald, Hubert, Paradine and Dargonet, are severally matched with Gondibert; Hurgonil, the lover of Orna, the Duke's sister; and Arnold and Hugo, generous rivals in Laura. Descriptions of battle are so frequent in epic poetry that scarcely any circumstances of variety are left to diversify them. Homer and his imitators have attempted novelty in the multiplicity of their combats by every possible variation of weapon, posture, and wound. They considered the human body with anatomical nicety; and dwelt with a savage pleasure upon every idea of pain and horror that studied butchery could excite. I shall leave it to the professed admirers of antiquity to determine under what head of poetical beauty such objects are to be ranged. The terrible is certainly a principal source of the sublime; but a slaughter-house or a surgery would not seem proper studies for a poet. D'avenant has drawn little from them. His battles are rendered interesting chiefly by the character and situation of the combatants. When Arnold, the favoured lover of Laura, is slain by Paradine, Hugo, who had over-thrown his antagonist, springs to avenge his rival, with these truly gallant expressions:

Vain conqueror, said Hugo then, return!
  Instead of laurel which the victor wears
Go gather cypress for thy brother's urn,
  And learn of me to water it with tears.

Thy brother lost his life attempting mine ;
Which cannot for Lord Arnold's loss suffice ;
I must revenge, unlucky Paradine !
The blood his death will draw from Laura's eyes.

We rivals were in Laura ; but though she
My griefs derided, his with sighs approv'd,
Yet I, in love's exact integrity,
Must take thy life for killing him she lov'd.

His generosity, however, was fatal both to his foe and himself. Hubert, disabled by a wound in his arm, is dishonoured by receiving his life from his conqueror ; upon which occasion the poet thus beautifully apostrophisis :

O Honour, frail as life thy fellow flower !
Cherish'd and watch'd and hum'rously esteem'd,
Then worn for short adornments of an hour ;
And is, when lost, no more than life redeem'd.

The two chiefs are still left closely engaging ; and when Hurgonil approaches to assist his lord, he is warmly commanded to retire. At length, after many mutual wounds, Oswald falls.

The death of the Prince at the same time takes off all restraint from his party, and incites them to revenge. Led by the wounded Hubert, old Vasco, and Borgio, they attack the hunters, who, besides the fatigue of the chase, are represented as somewhat inferior in number. A furious battle, the subject of the fifth canto, now ensues. Gondibert shines forth in all the splendour of a hero. By his prowess his friends are rescued, and the opposite leaders overthrown in various separate encounters ; and by his military skill the brave veterans of Oswald are defeated. The whole description of the battle is warm and animated.

In Gondibert's generous lamentation over the fallen, every heart must sympathise with the following pathetic tribute to the rival lovers :

Brave Arnold and his rival strait remove,
Where Laura shall bestrew their hallow'd ground ;
Protectors both, and ornaments of love ;
This said, his eyes out-wept his widest wound.

Tell her now these, love's faithful saints, are gone
The beauty they ador'd she ought to hide ;
For vainly will love's miracles be shown,
Since lover's faith with these brave rivals dy'd.

Say little Hugo never more shall mourn
In noble numbers, her unkind disdain;
Who now, not seeing beauty, feels no scorn;
And wanting pleasure, is exempt from pain.

When she with flowers Lord Arnold's grave shall strew,
And hears why Hugo's life was thrown away,
She on that rival's hearse will drop a few,
Which merits all that April gives to May.

The Duke now draws off his remaining friends towards Bergamo: but, on the journey, overcome by fatigue and loss of blood, he falls into a deadly swoon. His attendants, amidst their anxiety and confusion upon this event, are surprised, in the sixth canto, with the approach of a squadron of horse. This, however, proves to be a friendly body, led by old Ulfin, who, after recovering the Duke by a cordial, declares himself to have been a page to his grandsire, and gives a noble relation of the character and exploits of his great master. The rumour of Oswald's attack brought him to the relief of Gondibert; and we have a description, which will be thought too much bordering upon the ludicrous, of the strange confusion among his maimed veterans, who in their haste had seized upon each other's artificial limbs. This unsightly troop, with the deficiencies of hands, arms, legs, and eyes, can scarcely, with all the poet's art, be rendered a respectable object. Such instances of faulty judgment are frequent in the writings of an age which was characterised by vigour of imagination rather than correctness of taste. Ulfin leads the Duke to the house of the sage Astragon, where, with the approach of night, the canto and the first book conclude.

In the beginning of the second book, the poet carries us with Hurgonil and Tybalt and their noble dead, to Verona. The distant turrets first appearing, and then the great objects opening, one by one; the river, the palace, the temple, and the amphitheatre of Flaminius, form a landscape truly noble and picturesque. The view of the temple gives occasion to one of those elevated religious sentiments which dignify this poem:

This to soothe heaven the bloody Clephes built;
As if heaven's king so soft and easy were,
So meanly hous'd in heaven, and kind to guilt,
That he would be a tyrant's tenant here.

We have then a lively description of a city morning; with the various and uncertain rumours of the late event, among the people. The rest of the canto is employed in a debate, rather tedious, though intermixed with fine sentiments, concerning the propriety of granting funeral rites to those who had perished in the quarrel.

The progress of the fatal news is traced in the next canto. Aribert appears sitting in council in all the regal dignity. Tybalt relates the story. The king, in a majestic speech, complains of the toils and cares of empire, and predicts the baneful consequences likely to ensue. A more interesting scene is then disclosed, in which Tybalt declares the melancholy events of the combat to Rhodalind and the other ladies of the court. Great art is shown in the delicate ambiguity by which they are prepared to receive the tidings. Laura is overpowered by her loss; and calling on Arnold's name, is conveyed away by her female attendants. This tender scene of sorrow is finely contrasted by the abrupt entrance of Gartha, in all the wild pomp of mingled rage and grief.

No sooner was the pity'd Laura gone,
  But Oswald's sister, Gartha the renown'd,
Enters as if the world was overthrown,
  Or in the tears of the afflicted drown'd.

Unconquer'd as her beauty was her mind,
  Which wanted not a spark of Oswald's fire;
Ambition lov'd but ne'er to love was kind;
  Vex'd thrones did more than quiet shades desire.

Her garments now in loose neglect she wore,
  As suited to her wild dishevell'd hair.

In the fury of her passion she breaks out into execrations against the innocent.

Blasted be all your beauties, Rhodalind!
  Till you a shame and terror be to sight;
Unwing'd be Love, and slow as he is blind,
  Who with your looks poison'd my brother's sight!

At length she mounts her chariot, and flies with the wings of revenge to the veteran camp at Brescia. The terror impressed on the people by her hasty departure is imaged with great sublimity.

She seem'd their city's Genius as she pass'd,
  Who, by their sins expell'd, would ne'er return.

The third canto brings us to Brescia, where Hubert's arrival with the dead body of Oswald excites every emotion of surprise, grief and fury in the breasts of the brave veterans. They spend the night in this storm of contending passions; and at day break assemble round the tent of Hubert, who by a noble harangue gives additional fire to their revenge. They instantly arm, and demand to be led to Bergamo; when Gartha arrives. She turns their vengeance against the court, where she represents the triumph of Gondibert's faction, and the dishonour cast upon their own. The rage discovered in her countenance, overpowering the symptoms of grief, is painted with amazing grandeur in the following simile:

> The Sun did thus to threat'ned nature show
> His anger red, whilst guilt look'd pale in all,
> When clouds of floods did hang about his brow;
> And then shrunk back to let that anger fall.

This tempest is, however, allayed in the next canto by the arrival of the wise Hermegild; who, though grown aged in war and politics, is possessed with a youthful passion for Gartha. He solemnly binds his services to their party, for the reward of Gartha's love; but persuades them to submit to more cautious and pacific measures. Gartha returns with him to the court; and the funeral of Oswald with Roman rites, "Which yet the world's last law had not forbid," is described in the remaining part of the canto.

From scenes of rage and tumult the poet then leads us to the quiet shades of philosophy in the house of Astragon. This change is not better calculated for the reader's relief, than for a display of the richness and elevation of the writer's mind. That the friend of Hobbes should despise the learned lumber of the schools will not be thought extraordinary; but that he should distinctly mark out such plans of acquiring knowledge as have since been pursued with the greatest success, may well be deemed a remarkable proof of high and comprehensive genius. In Astragon's domain is a retired building, upon which is written in large letters, GREAT NATURE'S OFFICE. Here sit certain venerable sages, stiled *Nature's Registers*, busied in recording what is brought them by a throng called their *Intelligencers*. These men are diversly employed in exploring the haunts of beasts, of birds and of fishes, and collecting observations of their manners, their prey, their increase, and every circumstance of their œconomy. Near this place is NATURE'S NURSERY, stocked with every species of plants, of which the several properties and virtues are diligently examined. Is it not striking to find in the *house of Astragon* so exact a model of the *school of Linnæus?*

We are next led to the CABINET OF DEATH; a receptacle for skeletons and anatomical curiosities of every kind: and from thence, by a pleasing analogy, to the library, or, as it is termed, the MONUMENT OF BANISH'D MINDS. The feelings of his guests on entering this room are thus described:

> Where, when they thought they saw in well sought books
>   Th' assembled souls of all that men held wise,
> It bred such awful rev'rence in their looks
>   As if they saw the bury'd writers rise.

The poet then goes through a particular survey of the authors, distinguished into their several periods, countries, and professions; in which he exhibits a great extent of learning, and, much more to his honour, a sound and liberal judgment of what is truly valuable in learning. Of this, his account of the polemic divines will be thought no unfavourable specimen.

> About this sacred little book did stand
>   Unwieldly volumes, and in number great;
> And long it was since any reader's hand
>   Had reach'd them from their unfrequented seat.
>
> For a deep dust (which time does softly shed,
>   Where only time does come) their covers bear;
> On which grave spiders streets of weds had spread,
>   Subtle, and slight, as the grave writers were.
>
> In these heaven's holy fire does vainly burn,
>   Nor warms, nor lights, but is in sparkles spent:
> Where froward authors with disputes have torn
>   The garment seamless as the firmament.

If the subjects of this canto appear more noble and elevated than those which usually employ the episodes of heroic poetry, that of the ensuing one must strike with still superior dignity. Having acquainted us with the philosophy of his admired sage, the poet now, by a beautiful kind of allegory, instructs us in his religion. Astragon had dedicated three temples, to PRAYER, to PENITENCE, and to PRAISE. The *Temple of Prayer* is described as a building quite plain, open, and without bells; since nothing should tempt or summon to an office to which our own wants invite us. The duty of *Penitence* being a severity unpleasing to nature, its *temple* is contrived, by its solemn and uncommon appearance, to catch the sense. It is a vast building of black marble, hung with black, and furnished with that "dim religious light" which poets have so finely employed to excite kindred ideas of gloom and melancholy: but none, I think, have painted it with such strength of colouring as our author:

> Black curtains hide the glass: whilst from on high
> A winking lamp still threatens all the room,
> As if the lazy flame just now would die:
> Such will the sun's last light appear at doom.

A tolling bell calls to the temple; and every other circumstance belonging to it is imagined with great propriety and beauty.

But the poet's greatest exertions are reserved for his favourite *temple of Praise*. A general shout of joy is the summons to it. The building in its materials and architecture is gay and splendid beyond the most sumptuous palace. The front is adorned with figures of all kinds of musical instruments; all, as he most beautifully expresses it,

> That joy did e'er invent, or breath inspir'd,
> Or flying fingers touch'd into a voice.

The statues without, the pictures within, the decorations, and the choir of worshippers, are all suited with nice judgment, and described with genuine poetry. This distinguished canto concludes with these noble stanzas, the sum and moral, as it were, of the whole.

> Praise is devotion fit for mighty minds;
> The diff'ring world's agreeing sacrifice;
> Where heaven divided faiths united finds:
> But Prayer in various discord upwards flies.
>
> For Prayer the ocean is, where diversely
> Men steer their course, each to a sev'ral coast;
> Where all our interests so discordant be
> That half beg winds by which the rest are lost.
>
> By Penitence when we ourselves forsake,
> 'Tis but in wise design on piteous heav'n;
> In Praise we nobly give what God may take,
> And are without a beggar's blush forgiv'n.

Its utmost force, like powder's, is unknown;
And tho' weak kings excess of Praise may fear,
Yet when 'tis here, like powder, dangerous grown,
Heav'n's vault receives what would the palace tear.

The last thought will be termed, in this cold age, a conceit; and so may every thing that distinguishes wit and poetry from plain sense and prose.

The wonders of the *House of Astragon* are not yet exhausted.

To Astragon heaven for succession gave
One only pledge, and BIRTHA was her name.

This maid, her father's humble disciple and assistant, educated in the bosom of rural simplicity, is rendered a more charming object than even the renowned Rhodalind upon her throne.

Courts she ne'er saw, yet courts could have undone
With untaught looks and an unpractis'd heart;
Her nets the most prepar'd could never shun,
For Nature spread them in the scorn of Art.

But I check my desire of copying more from this exquisitely pleasing picture. My intention is to excite curiosity, not to gratify it. I hope I have already done enough for that purpose; and since the rest of this unfinished story may be comprised in a short compass, I shall proceed, with but few interruptions, to conclude a paper already swelled to an unexpected bulk.

That the unpractised Birtha should entertain an unresisted passion for the noblest of his sex; and that Gondibert, whose want of ambition alone had secured him from the charms of Rhodalind, should bow to those of his lovely hostess and handmaid, will be thought a very natural turn in the story; upon which, however, the reader may foresee the most interesting events depending. The progress of their love, though scarcely known to themselves, is soon discovered by the sage Astragon. This is expressed by the poet with a very fine turn of a common thought.

When all these symptoms he observed, he knows
From Alga which is rooted deep in seas,
To the high Cedar that on mountains grows,
No sov'reign herb is found for their disease.

The remainder of this poem, consisting of a third book written during the author's imprisonment, is composed of several detached scenes, in which the main plot lies ripening for future action.

Rivals are raised in Birtha. Flattering advances from the court, and more open declarations of love from Rhodalind, are in vain employed to assail the constancy of Gondibert. Various conflicts of passion arise, and interesting situations, well imagined, and painted in lively colours. Much is given, as in the former parts, to the introduction of elevated sentiment; with one example of which I shall finish my quotations. Several well born youths are placed about the person of Gondibert as his pages, whose education consists of the following great lessons from their lord:

> But with the early sun he rose, and taught
>   These youths by growing Virtue to grow great;
> Shew'd greatness is without it blindly sought,
>   A desperate charge which ends in base retreat.
>
> He taught them Shame, the sudden sense of ill;
>   Shame, nature's hasty conscience, which forbids
> Weak inclination ere it grows to will,
>   Or stays rash will before it grows to deeds.
>
> He taught them Honour, Virtue's bashfulness;
>   A fort so yieldless that it fears to treat;
> Like power it grows to nothing, growing less;
>   Honour, the moral conscience of the great.
>
> He taught them Kindness; souls civility
>   In which, nor courts, nor cities have a part;
> For theirs is fashion, this from falsehood free,
>   Where love and pleasure know no lust nor art.
>
> And Love he taught; the soul's stol'n visit made
>   Tho' froward age watch hard, and law forbid;
> Her walks no spy has trac'd, nor mountain staid;
>   Her friendship's cause is as the loadstone hid.
>
> He taught them love of Toil; Toil which does keep
>   Obstructions from the mind, and quench the blood;
> Ease but belongs to us like sleep, and sleep,
>   Like opium, is our med'cine, not our food.

The plot is at length involved in so many intricate and apparently insurmountable difficulties, that it is scarce possible to conceive a satisfactory termination. Perhaps the poet was sensible of a want of power to extricate himself, and chose thus to submit to a voluntary bankruptcy of invention, rather than hazard his reputation by going further. In his postscript, indeed, he excuses himself on account of sickness and approaching dissolution. However disappointed we may be by his abrupt departure from scenes which he has filled with confusion, we ought not to forget the pleasures already received from them. "If (says he to his reader, with more than the spirit of a dying man) thou art one of those who has been warmed with poetic fire, I reverence thee as my judge." From such a judicature, this NOBLE FRAGMENT would, I doubt not, acquire for him, what the critic laments his having lost, "the possession of that true and permanent glory of which his large soul appears to have been full."*

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* Discourse on Poetical Imitation.

CRITICAL REMARKS

ON

DRYDEN'S FABLES.

THE collection of Poems, termed DRYDEN'S FABLES, chiefly consists of a miscellany of pieces, partly translations, partly paraphrases and improvements; the former from Homer and Ovid, the latter from Chaucer and Boccacio. The subjects of the first are too well known to readers of poetry to interest by their novelty: they make, therefore, no part of our present consideration, which is confined to those of the second class. The latter, indeed, in the common estimation, exclusively possess the claim of being regarded as the Fables or Tales of the admired Author, under which name no one understands pieces of mere classical translation. Though less original than perhaps is commonly supposed, the freedom with which the writer has intermixed his own language and sentiments, gives them all the air of originality, and they bear the decisive stamp of his genius.

The records of poetical composition afford few examples of mental exertion so remarkable as that which gave birth to these pieces. Dryden, who had from early life been an author by profession, was induced, either by motives of interest, or by the peculiar turn of his studies, to devote his poetical powers chiefly to the purposes of religious or political party. He had obtained great celebrity by his performances of this kind; of which the principal were "Absalom and Achitophel," a disguised satire referring to the state of politics in the court of Charles II.; and "The Hind and Panther," a dialogue in the form of a fable, exhibiting the leading arguments employed by the Romish church against those who separated from it. To that church he had become a convert, when the accession of James II. to the throne inspired sanguine expectations of the recovery of its ancient predominance in the kingdom.

The revolution entirely overthrew these hopes, and at the same time gave an ascendancy to those popular principles of government, of which Dryden, during the two preceding reigns, had been the virulent oppugner. It was not, therefore, to be wondered at, how much soever it might be lamented, that the deposed laureat, at the advanced age of sixty-eight, should be obliged to seek a subsistence from the exertion of his talents and industry. Among other engagements of the literary kind, he contracted with the booksellers for a volume of poems, to consist of a determinate number of lines, at a payment proportioned to that number.

Such was the mercantile transaction that produced his Fables, —a set of compositions in which his genius sports at ease, freed from the shackles of a political or polemical task; and which affords every species of poetical excellence that could be derived from long experience, joined with unabated vigour. The manner in which he speaks of his mental constitution at this period, though confident, is well justified by the accompanying proofs of his ability. "I think myself (says he) as vigorous as ever in the faculties of my soul, excepting only my memory, which is not impaired to any great degree; and if I lose not more of it, I have no great reason to complain. What judgment I had, increases rather than diminishes; and thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject." This account is so true, that perhaps no other example is to be met with, of the fruits of age partaking so much of the character of youth. The full tide and varied flow of the verse, the copiousness and splendour of the descriptions, the vivacity of the sentiments, and abundance of the allusions, all indicate exuberance of fancy and unextinguishable fire, and instead of the languor of an ungrateful task, he exhibits the animation of one who practises a favourite amusement for his pleasure. He is still that luxuriant evergreen which his own beautiful lines in "The Flower and the Leaf," so aptly characterise:

> "Ev'n when the vital sap retreats below,
> Ev'n when the hoary head is hid in snow,
> The *life is in the leaf*, and still between
> The fits of falling snows, appears the streaky green."

Of the particular pieces in this volume, the author's favourite is evidently the heroic poem of PALAMON AND ARCITE, imitated from Chaucer, who, though not the inventor of the story, was Dryden's original. He has not scrupled in his preface to panegyrise it (Chaucer's poem) in terms which will scarcely bear to be weighed in the critical balance. Regarding it as a composition of the epic class, he compares it with the Iliad and Æneid, and affirms that "the story is more pleasing than [that of] either of them, the manners as perfect, the diction as poetical, the learning as deep and various, and the disposition full as artful."

This is high praise from one who knew what he was praising; but the critical opinions of Dryden are rather sentences formed for the occasion, than the well-weighed maxims of a consistent literary code. The *story* of Palamon and Arcite will, at best, bear a comparison with some episode in a legitimate epic: for a love adventure will, I presume, in the judgment of few readers, stand in competition with the destruction of one potent empire, or the foundation of another.

In what sense the writer meant to assert the *perfection of its manners,* it is not easy to divine. Certainly, in the obvious one of giving a just representation of the age, country, and persons appertaining to the fable, nothing can be further from truth than this assertion. The manners in the Iliad are universally allowed to be the best authority we possess for the state of Greece in the early stage of its civilisation. Those of the Æneid present a picture of the same kind, but, as framed upon imitation instead of observation, less correct. In Palamon and Arcite, the age of the rude half-savage hero, Theseus, is converted into the most splendid period of chivalry: such indeed, as it exists in the fables of knight errantry, rather than as it ever formed a part of real history. Nothing can be more gross and glaring than this anachronism, to which the language and phraseology are moulded, as well as the manners and incidents.

Perhaps, however, Dryden only meant to say, that, after admitting this fiction as a poetical license, the assumed manners and characters of the piece will be found to be well preserved. I doubt, however, if much praise be due to the easy observance of consistency in portraitures marked with the uniformity which the artificial principles of chivalry necessarily produced. The duties of a loyal knight towards his liege lord, his mistress, and his antagonist, were laid down with as much precision as the rules of any monastic order, and as little permitted the deviations of particular tempers or opinions. If, in this story, Arcite is represented as the peculiar servant of Mars, and Palamon of Venus, they are both made equally susceptible of the amorous passion in its most fanciful and exquisite form, and equally ready to renounce all former ties of friendship, and fly to their swords in order to decide their respective claims. So exactly, indeed, are they balanced, that in the concluding combat, neither does Arcite gain, nor Palamon lose, any martial honour. The kings of Thrace and India, though studiously contrasted in their figures, exhibit no diversity in action, and are, indeed, useless for all purposes but those of parade. Emilia, the lady upon the possession of whom the whole conduct of the fable turns, is a mere passive personage, contended for as a prize, without any interference of her own inclinations. In this respect she resembles the Lavinia of the Æneid; but the resemblance is of no advantage to the interest of the piece. During the long period of the story, she is passing several years of her prime apparently unnoticed and insignificant, though a transient glimpse of her charms was capable of inspiring such a romantic passion in her unknown lovers. Theseus is a feudal monarch, drawn with considerable dignity; but if generosity was intended to form part of his character, it is blemished by his resolution of keeping the two young knights prisoners for life, for no other crime than the defence of their country. This unfeeling rigour is aggravated by his detention of Palamon after he had consented to the liberation of Arcite; an incident, however, essentially connected with the events of the fable.

On the whole, the chief merit of this story consists in the copious fund it affords for various and splendid description; an advantage of which the poet has so well availed himself, that it will not be easy to name any work of its compass, ancient or modern, comparable to it in this respect. It keeps the imagination perpetually on the stretch with the rapid succession of its pictures, real and allegorical, with the warmth and bustle of its action, and the gorgeous pomp of its scenery. Nor is it destitute of sentiments appropriate to the situations of the actors, and to the survey taken by a spectator of the passing events; for although the piece was originally composed in those ages which are considered as little favourable to the human understanding, yet it partakes largely of such learning and such philosophy as were then cultivated, and which, perhaps, have been treated with more contempt than they deserved.

The part of Dryden, in his renovation of this tale, is almost entirely confined to the language in which he has clothed it; for, not only are all its circumstances closely copied from Chaucer, but every ornamental addition, and even every moral reflection, is to be found in the work of the old bard, though often but rudely sketched or coarsely executed. Even the minute decorations of poetical diction are frequently transferred from the original; and whole lines are transcribed when the dialect and prosody permitted their insertion. Yet Dryden's merit in the piece will never be estimated at a low rate by one capable of feeling the charms of genuine poetry; for, perhaps, in no composition of the language is there more of that fire and energy which hurries the reader along, and makes him a sharer in every incident, or more of that force and brilliancy of colouring which brings out every figure, and gives it the fullest effect. If we imagine a Raphael, or a Corregio, filling up the outlines of some early master, we may form a just conception of what the muse of Dryden has effected upon the draught of Chaucer. To the epic magnificence of diction he has joined a natural tone of expression, proceeding from the intermixture of common words and phrases, which is the characterictic of his style, and gives it a spirit hardly to be met with in that of any other poet.

Of the versification of this piece, it is enough to say, that it possesses every excellence for which the writer is so justly famed. The improvements upon the matter of the original are most conspicuous in the sentimental passages, where Dryden has frequently expanded a bare hint into a weighty and dignified sentence. Thus, where Theseus, terminating his long oration after the death of Arcite, says, in the bald simplicity of the ancient bard,

> "What may I conclude of this long serie
> But after sorrowe I rede us to be merie,
> And thanken Jupiter for all his grace?"

the modern rises in the following lofty strain:

> What then remains, but after past annoy,
> To take the good vicissitude of joy;
> To thank the gracious gods for what they give,
> Possess our souls, and while we live, to live?

In Palamon's address to Venus, Dryden has added to the short invocation of Chaucer, a very beautiful version of some celebrated lines of Lucretius in praise of the same goddess. Arcite's prayer to Mars is scarcely less improved, and opens with a tragic grandeur that finely contrasts with the softness and elegance of the former.

Many of the descriptive touches of the modern poet likewise greatly enhance the picturesque effect of the original paintings. Thus, when Palamon and Arcite first become enemies, the expression of their hatred is strongly marked to the sight by Dryden:

——— when they met, they made a surley stand,
And glar'd like angry lions as they pass'd.

Among many supposed representations in the temple of Venus, of too abstract a nature to be made manifest to the senses, which he has rather injudiciously copied from his original, he adds the visible forms of

——— issuing sighs that smok'd along the wall.

Chaucer's "porter Idleness" becomes a characteristic figure in the hands of Dryden:

Before the palace-gate, in careless dress,
And loose array, sat portress Idleness.

The "small houndes about the fete" of Diana are, by him, animated with the affections of their species,

And watch with upward eyes the motions of their queen.

Many more instances of similar embellishment might be cited; and indeed nothing less could be expected from such a master in his art, whose attention was solely occupied in beautifying and polishing a ready-furnished design.

In the tale of Sigismonda and Guiscardo, from Boccacio, he could derive no store of poetical imagery from his original, which is an unadorned narrative in prose; nor has he aimed at more than that middle style of verse which suits the relation of a domestic occurrence, and the eloquence of sentiment. Force and dignity of language, with singular clearness, are his characteristics in this story, which keeps close to the Italian author, both in the narrative and the sentimental part. In one point, indeed, Dryden has better consulted morals and decorum; which is, that he has made a secret marriage precede the accomplishment of the lovers' wishes; but, on the other hand, he has added so much warmth of colouring to the description, that decency cannot upon the whole be reckoned a gainer. Female delicacy, indeed, was a thing of which he never seems to have entertained a conception. The love here painted is simply what the French would call *amour physique;* a natural and allowable affection, it is true, but such as all writers, attentive to the preservation of mental purity, have studiously kept out of sight. Dryden, on the contrary, brings it to open view, without any veil to soften its features. The address of Sigismonda to her father after detection, the firm and dignified language of which gives it an air of elevation, almost incurs the charge of impudence, from the broad and undisguised confession of feelings which none but the loosest of the sex would avow.

The incidents of this story are, however, striking and pathetic, and the catastrophe is wrought with skill. The address of Sigismonda to her lover's heart in the vase, is copied from the Italian; but Dryden has not the excuse of Italian conceit for his extravagant line—

> My tears shall set thee first afloat within thy tomb.

The manner in which she sets about this duty to her lover's remains seems to require the serious application of the comic maxim, "Women, when they list, can weep." Dryden has, however, made it truly poetical by the beauty of his verses, and the simile of the "low-hung clouds." It were to be wished that his judgment had rejected the idea of "discharging her head" by the flow of tears, which gives an image rather medical than poetical. The parallel passage in Boccacio is worth copying, as it will afford an useful comparison between the writer in prose and the writer in verse.

"Et cosi detto, non ultramente che se una fonte d'acqua nella testa havuta havesse, senza fare alcun femminil romore, sopra la coppa chinatasi piangendo, comincio à versare tante lagrime, che mirabil cosa furono a riguardare, basciando infinite volte il morto cuore."

"Thus having spoken, as if there had been a fountain of water in her head, bending over the cup, without any feminine lamentation, she shed such an abundance of tears as was wonderful to behold, giving innumerable kisses to the dead heart."

The simplicity is certainly no diminution of the pathetic.

The Cock and the Fox; or The Tale of the Nun's Priest, owes almost all its beauty, its learning, and its absurdity, to the original author, Chaucer. The fable, in which birds and beasts talk like school-men and divines, bespeaks the taste of the dark ages; a taste which Dryden had sanctioned by his "Hind and Panther." Ascribing to the inferior animals the speech and reason of men (the essence of fable) is already such a deviation from nature and truth, that an additional improbability costs little more to the imagination. It must be owned, however, that quotations from the philosophers and fathers have a whimsical effect in a dialogue between Chanticleer and Partlet. The Latin passage, "Mulier est hominis confusio," so complaisantly interpreted to Partlet, is a piece of waggery literally copied from Chaucer; there is an inconsistency, however, in making her unacquainted with Latin, after she had quoted Galen and Cato, unless it be supposed, that Dame Partlet's learning, like Shakespeare's, was derived from translation.

The most striking parts of the description in this tale are taken from Chaucer with little addition or improvement: the lively pictures, for example, of the cock and the fox, are only new varnished by Dryden's versification. The humourous group of pursuers of the fox is Chaucer's with the exception of the vicar who is introduced with little propriety; and no advantage is gained by the more exaggerated terms in which their action is described by the modern poet. It is not in his natural, but in his intellectual paintings, that the superiority of Dryden appears with its proper lustre. Thus, the fine passage respecting the nature of dreams,

> Dreams are but interludes that fancy makes, &c.

is barely suggested by four simple lines of the original. He has displayed his theological skill in discussing more at length, and with more argumentative precision, the knotty point of predestination. It is observable, that he has superadded to the treacherous character of Reynard, the circumstance of religious hypocrisy; a vice he was always fond of lashing, both in season and out of season.

Like many other amusing fables, it has not much instruction to boast of. The most obvious moral deducible from it, is a warning against love of flattery. Chaucer to this has added the exposure of one

> That jangleth when that he should hold his peace,

alluding to the folly of the fox, who gives the cock an opportunity of escaping, by opening his mouth to make a speech: but this purpose is overlooked or rejected by Dryden.

In none of these tales does the genius of the poet break out with more splendour than in that of THEODORE AND HONORIA, from Boccacio. Exclusive of the names, which are different in the Italian author, his narrative is exactly followed by Dryden, who is an inventor only in the picturesque touches with which he has animated the recital. The story in itself is, indeed, highly impressive, and full of that romantic wildness which seizes on the imagination; but the effect is greatly enhanced by the art of the poet, who has improved every circumstance that might contribute to the leading emotion, that of terror. The manner in which he prepares the reader for the first appearance of the horrid phantom cannot be too much admired;

> Whilst listening to the murm'ring leaves he stood, &c.

The singular happiness of the versification in the lines descriptive of the sudden calm and pause in nature, previous to the whirlwind which ushered in the apparition, has attracted the notice of various critics, and must be felt by every ear sensible of the harmony of poetry. The figures of the flying maid, the hell-hounds, and the infernal huntsman, are drawn with wonderful force; but it must be acknowledged that no small part of the praise belongs to the original, which has sketched the same objects in a very spirited manner. The passage is worth quotation. "Vide venire per un boschetto asai folto d'arbuscelli e di pruni, correndo verso il luogo dove egli era, una bellissima giovane ignuda, scapigliata e tutta graffiata dalle frasche e dai pruni, piagnendo e gridando forte merce; e oltre a questo le vide a fianchi due grandissimi e fieri mastini, liquali duramente appresso correndole spesse volte crudelmente dove la giungevano, la mordevano; e dietro allei vide venire sopra un corsiere nero un cavalier bruno forte nel viso crucciato con uno stocco in mano, lei di morte con parole spaventevoli e villane minacciando."

"He saw, issuing from a thicket overgrown with bushes and thorns, and running towards the place where he was, a very beautiful damsel, naked with dishevelled hair, and all torn with the briars and brambles, wailing and crying aloud, 'Mercy!' And he further saw at her flanks two great and fierce mastiffs, which running close after her, frequently reached and cruelly bit her: behind them he saw riding upon a black courser a dark complexioned cavalier, with fury in his countenance, and a drawn sword in his hand, threatening her with death in terrible and injurious terms."

Dryden has with good effect made the damsel's cry for mercy correspond with the bite of the dogs, and added the superstition of the relief produced by invoking the name of Heaven. The picture of the knight, too, is finely heightened by the line,

> With flashing flames his ardent eyes were fill'd,

and by the action of cheering his dogs to the chase.

It is a proof of the poet's extraordinary powers, that he has been able to make the second representation of the visionary scene scarcely less impressive than the first; it is aided, indeed, by the contrast of the splendid feast preceding it, and by the presence of Honoria herself to witness it. Dryden has much enlarged upon the original in describing the operation of the tremendous spectacle on the lady's mind, according to his usual practice of dwelling diffusely upon circumstances of mental affection. Her looking back at every noise, and starting as if she heard

> ——— the horseman-ghost come thund'ring for his prey,

are strokes of nature. The lessen of the tale was probably the least part of the concern of either writer. Its coarse conclusion in Dryden is entirely his own.

The Flower and the Leaf, or, The Lady in the Arbour, a vision, from Chaucer, possesses in the original that degree of descriptive splendour, which limits the merit of the modern poet to little more than improved diction and harmonious versification. The very beautiful introductory picture of spring, as influencing the vegetable creation, is, however, Dryden's own, and displays the power of a master to throw novelty upon a trite subject. The progress of the buds, which at first shrink from the cold blast, and stand "doubting at the door of life," till at length, filled with the genial spirit, they expand to the sun, and breathe out their souls of fragrance, is delineated with exquisite fancy and elegance.

The scenery of this vision is not less gorgeous than that of the Knight's Tale; and like it, derives most of its brilliancy from the costume of chivalry. Dryden seems to riot in description of this kind, which he decorates with all the pomp and pride of his verse. He professes, however, to have been attracted to this tale principally by its moral, which consists in extolling active virtue and fortitude in comparison with inglorious ease and self-indulgence. Yet the allegory is confused and obscure, and little interest is attached to the action or actors.

There is no hint in Chaucer of the fairy system adopted by Dryden for the personages in the pageant, and which somewhat resembles the machinery in the Rape of the Lock. Chaucer, indeed, supposes them to have had a prior existence, and identifies some of them as the Nine Worthies, the knights of the Round Table, the "Douseperis" (twelve peers of Charlemagne), &c.; but he does not concern himself to account for their appearance on the present occasion. So far, therefore, the fiction is improved by the modern poet.

Dryden has fallen into a singular inadvertence in giving *bows* to Arthur's knights, in which he finds an emblematical propriety,

> For bows the strength of brawny arms imply.

The original, it is true, speaks of their "baring bowes in their hand," but these are only the laurel *boughs* mentioned in the beginning of the description, disguised under a different orthography.

The comparison between the qualities of the leaf and of the flower is wrought by Dryden with much beauty, and the moral is well pointed; yet the fable upon the whole partakes of the languor usually attached to allegory, and probably will to most readers appear the least entertaining in the collection, though certainly not the least poetical.

The keen and lively sarcasm against the priesthood with which the WIFE OF BATH'S TALE opens, is found in the original author, Chaucer: but it so well suited the disposition of his moderniser, that he has given it with enlargements. The "midnight parson posting o'er the green with gown tucked up to wakes" is a figure of his own invention, by which he doubtless meant to extend his satire to the clergy of his own time; but he did not reflect that the same person could not consistently sustain the part of Chaucer's friar, who "bids his beads both even-song and morn."

The subsequent story is related by Dryden in a paraphrastical manner, with free license of invention. One of his added passages is remarkable, as it alludes to that species of apology for his own licentiousness in writing, which the attacks of Collier and others had forced from him.

> Then courts of kings were held in high renown,
> Ere made the common brothels of the town:
> There virgins honourable vows receiv'd,
> But chaste as maids in monasteries liv'd:
> The king himself, to nuptial ties a slave,
> No bad example to his poets gave:
> And they, not bad but in a vicious age,
> Had not, to please the prince, debauch'd the stage.

At this time he was, indeed, if not cured by age and reflection of his propensities, yet awed into some regard for decorum; and he has taken credit in his preface for abstaining from versifying Chaucer's prologue to this very tale, which was afterwards one of Pope's juvenile exercises.

The story of Midas, introduced by the way of illustration, is enlivened with some humourous strokes, not very reverential to royalty; for Dryden, though accustomed to use the language of the most obsequious courtier, appears in his heart to have regarded the distinctions of rank and birth, as they will always be looked upon by the man who is conscious of possessing, in his own mind, something intrinsically superior to both.

In the progress of the tale, after the beldam has agreed with the knight to furnish him with a solution of the queen's question, Dryden adds a circumstance of which there is no vestige in the original. He makes her spread her mantle on the ground, and seat the knight and herself upon it, when they are conveyed with a wish to King Arthur's court. This fiction, apparently borrowed from the Arabian Nights, is not unsuitable to the fairy machinery on which the tale is founded; yet it seems to injure the final effect, by anticipating supernatural powers, which should have remained concealed from the knight till the concluding trial of his obedience.

The "long sermon," as Dryden justly calls it, of the bride on the wedding night, is greatly amplified by the modern writer, particularly with respect to the topic of nobility. As this is also discussed at length in the story of Sigismonda and Guiscardo, he has thought it necessary to apologise in his preface for the repetition, which he imputes to the failure of his memory. In the present instance he has borrowed some thoughts from Juvenal, an author with whom he was familiar as a translator. The beautiful metaphor in which nobility is termed

——— a long trail of light to thee descending down,

is the product of his own fancy.

The tale of CYMON AND IPHIGENIA, from Boccacio, begins with an apologetical preface, in which the poet, in his own name, defends himself from the "severe divine", who had inveighed against the licentiousness of his verse, and retorts upon him in a way that displays more irritation than penitence. His praise of virtuous love, however, is equally just and noble, and forms a suitable prelude to a story, of which the animating effects of that passion are the subject.

All the incidents of the tale, as well as many of the descriptive beauties, are copied from the Italian. The natural circumstance of Cymon's quarter-staff, which appears truly English, is taken from the "bastone in collo" of Boccacio; but the happy line,

He whistled as he went for want of thought,

is Dryden's addition. In the picture of the sleeping nymph, he has exerted his utmost skill; and every reader, sensible to the charms of versification, will admire the lines in which the "fanning wind" and the "rising bosom" are so melodiously alternated. The apt simile of the light running through chaos, by which the sudden effect of love upon the sluggish soul of Cymon is illustrated, is original in our poet; yet it might have been suggested by the

'Ignea rima micans percurrit lumine nimbos"

of Virgil. That of the pilgrim who

——— stands with awful eyes to watch the dawn of day,

is another of his poetical contributions.

His propensity to exaggerate in all his paintings has led him too much to multiply epithets denoting the stupidity of the new lover, such as "the man beast," "the fool of nature," "the slavering cudden." The miracle of creating sense in an absolute idiot is too great for even love to effect; and the more modest wonder of rousing to action the latent seeds of intellect, affords sufficient scope for the encomiast of that passion. This, indeed, is the light in which the change produced in Cymon is afterwards viewed; for Dryden, varying a little from the poetical imagery of the original, thus describes the operation of the new agent in his soul:

What then of altered Cymon shall we say,
But that the fire which chok'd in ashes lay,
A load too heavy for his soul to move,
Was upward blown below, and brush'd away by love?

The subsequent events of the fable will not bear a rigourous examination in a moral view, since the sole maxim they inculcate is, that every thing is lawful to lovers. The ladies are to determine how far Dryden has improved the story by representing Iphigenia as a willing prey to the ravishers, of which no symptom appears in the narration of Boccacio: it may, however, be presumed, that his habitual coarseness of sentiment, with respect to feminine attachments, will excite their displeasure, and that they will disavow the line

She hugg'd th' offender, and forgave th' offence.

The modest Italian takes care to inform his reader, that Cymon lost his newly gained Iphigenia, "senza altro haverle tolto, che alcun bascio"—having taken nothing from her but a few kisses.

They who are acquainted with Dryden's manner and principles will not doubt that the lively satire on the "rude militia raw in fields" is all his own. When this is compared with what he has said of the regular soldiers of Tancred,

Dangerous to freedom, and desir'd alone
By kings who seek an arbitrary throne,

in which he doubtless alluded to the guards of King William, it will curiously exemplify the inconsistencies of a party spirit.

The sudden changes of fortune in this story render it interesting, though its bloody catastrophe is displeasing, and we feel a repugnance to ally the cause of Cymon with that of Lysimachus, which has no colour of right or justice.

By way of atonement for his perpetual vein of satire against the clergy, Dryden has wrought with uncommon care his CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON, imitated and enlarged from that of Chaucer in the prologue to his Canterbury Tales. The features are essentially the same as those of the original; nor is there one truly pastoral virtue added to the draught of the ancient poet; but Dryden's has a more sanctified air, and is more conformable to the Roman Catholic model. Chaucer is contented to praise the patience with which he submitted to indigent circumstances; while his imitator thinks it necessary to add the merit of voluntary abstinence: the first makes his parson charitable to the poor; the second represents him as renouncing every idea of property, and regarding all he received as part of the public store.

The beautiful similies and illustrations with which Dryden's portrait is interspersed, are his own, one excepted, which alludes to the superior degree of holiness required in the clerical character, thus expressed in the original:

"And this figure he added yet thereto,
That if gold rustes, what shuld iren do?"

The salvo for papal power, under the notion of the double reign of St. Peter's successor, is an offering paid by the convert to his new faith: Chaucer, addicted to the principles of Wickliffe, was not likely to give a sanction to Romish usurpation.

All the latter part of Dryden's piece is an addition, evidently referring to the nonjuring clergy under King William. It supports the doctrine of indefeasible right to the crown in the lineal heirs, and the consequent duty of subjects to conform to it:

That the title stood entail'd, had Richard had a son?

What he stigmatises as "the senseless plea of right by providence," invented by "a flattering priest," must allude to the injudicious defence of William's succession to the throne, by Bishop Burnet. Of this plea, Dryden justly observes, that it

——— lasts no longer than the present sway,
But justifies the next who comes in play.

His picture of the priest after he had voluntarily quitted his benefice, extending, like a primitive apostle, his care of souls throughout the land, is highly interesting, and was probably drawn from the life. Whatever be thought of the judgment or consistency of the nonjuring clergy, it cannot be denied that some of them were bright examples of pious resignation under sufferings for conscience sake.

Such are the varied contents of this noble production of Dryden's old age. At a similar late period of life, Milton wrote his Paradise Lost. The two works will bear no comparison in point of magnitude and grandeur; yet those beauties in detail, for which alone such a design as that of renovating and adorning ancient writings affords scope, are not less conspicuous in Dryden's Fables, than the higher qualities of poetry are in the masterpiece of Milton. All that at any time constituted the characteristic excellence of Dryden's muse, appears in full perfection in these autumnal fruits; and it is impossible to conceive a time whilst English poetry shall continue to be cultivated, when the harmony of numbers and splendour of diction in these pieces, shall cease to inspire admiration and delight.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

POPE'S

ESSAY ON MAN.

OF the poems of Pope, none perhaps is more celebrated in popular fame, none has afforded more passages for storing in the memory, and applying on common occasions, than the Essay on Man. It cannot, therefore, be an uninteresting topic, to inquire what has given it such a share of the public approbation; and how its author has contrived to render it at the same time the favourite of the graver part, and the admiration of the more polished, of his readers.

The work is by the writer himself represented as a *short system of ethics*, which he might as well have composed in prose as in verse, had he not preferred the latter for two reasons;—one, that principles and maxims when versified are more impressive, and adhere more firmly in the memory; the other, that he was able to express himself with more brevity in verse than in prose. With respect, then, to the subject itself, it appears that he did not select it on account of any peculiar fitness he discerned in it to become the ground-work of a poem; but, that, having chosen it for another reason, he gave it the clothing of verse, as in his opinion the most advantageous. And this representation nearly coincides with the received fact, that the work was suggested to him by his friend, Lord Bolingbroke, who sketched out the plan, and furnished most of the materials, with the intention of ushering into the world a system of his own, decorated with the poetry of Pope. Bolingbroke had himself sufficient vigour of imagination and brilliancy of style to have written a prose essay which might engage the attention of persons fond of moral and philosophical speculation; but by judiciously borrowing the

Muse of Pope, he has diffused his sentiments on these topics through all classes and ages of English literature; has made them familiar to our early and our mature conceptions; and stamped them in indelible characters on the language of the country. This conversion of a dry and argumentative subject into a splendid and popular one, is a miracle of the poetic art; and an inquiry into the means by which it has been effected will probably go far into the elucidation of that *essential character* of poetical composition which distinguishes it from prose.

On taking a survey of the Essay on Man for the purpose of marking and arranging its most striking passages, it will probably be found that they are reducible to three principal heads. 1st. A maxim, proposition, or sentence often occurs, presented in the naked simplicity of philosophical language, but so concentred by nervous brevity, and rounded by the harmonious structure of the verse, that it sinks into the mind with the same kind of force that a weighty and polished ball penetrates solid matter. It would be easy from every epistle to adduce examples of this excellence. Thus, speaking of the Deity, he says,

> To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
> He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all:

Of Man;

> The glory, jest, and riddle of the world:
> Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err:

Of Providence;

> All Nature is but Art unknown to thee;
> All Chance, Direction which thou canst not see;
> All Discord, Harmony not understood;
> All partial Evil, universal Good.

In this style most of the purely argumentative parts are written; and so superior was Pope to all other authors, whether in verse or prose, in this respect, that his sincere friend and admirer, Swift, selects this faculty as his distinguishing excellence:

> "When Pope can in one couplet fix
> More sense than I can do in six;"

yet Swift himself was by no means a feeble or prolix writer. Now, as nothing comes more home to the minds of men in general, or is more universally congenial to the taste of readers, than the writer was occasionally tired or bewildered in following his argument—and that the poet and system builder did not always happily draw together: but these remarks lead to the consideration of another topic, the proper subject or matter of this Essay.

Concerning the *system of ethics* contained in the Essay on Man, much has been written; and in particular, the learned prelate who undertook the office of editor to Pope's miscellaneous works has bestowed much pains upon it in the elaborate notes and commentary accompanying the text. But erudition and acuteness are not the only requisites of a good commentator. That conformity of sentiment which enables him fully to enter into the intention of his author, and that fairness of disposition which places him above every wish of disguising or misrepresenting it, are qualifications not less essential. In these points it is no breach of candour to affirm (since the public voice has awarded the sentence) that Dr. Warburton has in various of his critical labours shown himself extremely defective; and perhaps in none more than in those he has expended upon this performance; his manifest purposes in which have been, to give it a systematic perfection that it does not possess, to conceal as much as possible the suspicious source whence the author derived his leading ideas, and to reduce the whole to the standard of moral orthodoxy. So much is the sense of the poet strained and warped by these processes of his commentator, that it is scarcely possible in many places to enter into his real meaning, without laying aside the commentary, and letting the text speak for itself.

Somewhat, however, of an analytical view of the subject and reasoning, connected by such a chain of method as is clearly deducible from the work itself, cannot but be useful by way of preparing the reader, who perhaps may be little conversant with argumentative topics, for comprehending it as a whole. And this I shall endeavour to supply by a prefatory sketch of the contents, drawn up with as much brevity as is consistent with the purpose in view.

The Essay on Man is divided into four epistles. Of these, the first peculiarly treats of Man with respect to the place he holds in the universe; and the principal topic is the refutation of all objections against the wisdom and benevolence of that providence which placed him here, derived from the weakness and imperfection of his nature. After a dignified exordium, in which the poet invites his friend to accompany him in a survey of the whole, "scene of Man," with the final intention of justifying the ways of God towards him, (which is to be regarded as the general subject of the entire Essay)—he proceeds to some remarks on the impossibility of comprehending, with the limited faculties of the human mind, the plan of Deity in framing the system of the universe; and he sets in strong contrast the omniscience of the Creator against the ignorance of the creature. Yet, in laying it down as a principle, that "we can can reason only from what we know," he seems to invalidate some of his own conjectural arguments concerning that *order* of the universe which is to account for apparent partial defects. The leading idea running through this book, is that of a *scale of beings*, rising in due gradation one above another, all bearing a relation to the great whole, and each endowed with the faculties proper for its station. In such a scale, there must be such a being as Man; and there is, therefore, no more reason to wonder that he is not elevated higher, than that he is raised so high. That he is best fitted for the place he occupies, is attempted to be shown by various striking observations; and much lively correction is bestowed upon that pride which inclines us to believe the whole creation made for our use alone, and leads us rather to form vain wishes for unattainable perfections, than to accommodate ourselves to our present lot. After a very noble description of the divine attributes, and an exhortation to pious trust in an over-ruling Providence, the book concludes with asserting as a clear deduction from the whole, the great axiom that *whatever is, is right.* That this conclusion is strictly warranted by the premises, and that the mode of proof is the best that could be devised in point of cogency and arrangement, will probably be called in question by logical reasoners; but the wonderful energy of some of the passages, and the poetical splendour of others, are so calculated for effect on the mind of the reader, that he must be cold indeed who does not rise from the perusal impressed and animated. Perhaps, if a person were called upon to exhibit an example of the utmost power of the English language in fulness, strength, and dignity of expression, he could not choose more happily than those lines near the close of this epistle in which the Deity is represented as the *soul of the universe.*

The second epistle begins with pointing out "the proper study of mankind," namely, themselves; yet it cannot be said that the bold contrast drawn between the powers of the human mind, on the one part, and its weakness on the other, is highly encouraging. If Newton, with the wonderful reach of his intellectual faculties, were unable to "describe or fix one movement of his mind," what other man may hope for success in an investigation of his own nature? Notwithstanding, however, these sarcasms against human wisdom, apparently drawn from the school of Charron, the poet proceeds seriously to the subject of his epistle; and having stated the *two principles* which rule over Man, *self-love* and *reason*, he goes on to show the character and office of each, and their opposition or concurrence in influencing human conduct. Self-love he calls the *moving principle* which excites to action, on which account it is made the strongest; reason is the *comparing* and *restraining* principle; the objects of the former are some immediate good; of the latter, some remote or consequential good. Both have the same general ends of attaining pleasure and avoiding pain. But surely this representation is inaccurate; for self-love and reason stand in no sort of opposition to each other; and the second is rather an instrument employed by the first, the better to effectuate its ends, than a distinct principle of action. Reason is more properly opposed to the *passions;* which Pope justly terms *modes of self-love*, all having for their object some real or supposed good. These, he says, duly tempered and blended, give "all the strength and colour of our life." Adopting, however, the theory which he has more particularly opened in one of his moral epistles, he asserts the existence of a *master passion*, which swallows up the rest, and may be regarded as the innate disease of the mind, from every faculty of which it derives fresh nourishment. Yet instead of attempting to eradicate this leading propensity, he advises to follow "nature's road," and content ourselves with keeping it in proper bounds; for our passions, and even vices, by means of due culture, are convertible in [illegible]est virtues. The poet here admits that notion of the [illegible]alists, which supposes the limits of virtue and vice t[illegible] in such a manner, as to render it im[illegible] say [illegible]ds and the [illegible]gins; or rath[illegible]makes [illegible] only the [illegible] some virtue. [illegible]t ruli[illegible]hich is i[illegible]stances our l[illegible] is in [illegible] leading [illegible] every Man is [illegible]s and [illegible]gree. H[illegible] with showing how, in the scheme of Providence, the different passions, propensities, follies and defects of Men, are all made to conspire to the general good—how the ties of mutual aid and interest are by their means drawn more closely—and how at length they reconcile Man to the loss of a being so full of imperfection. Finally, he enumerates the various kinds of happiness arising from the variety of Men's tempers and pursuits, and from the changes of object that accompany the different stages of life in each individual; and his inference from the whole matter is, that "though Man is a fool, God is wise." This book is not remarkable for its poetical beauties. Its language is mostly that of argument and simple illustration, and the subject is pursued with scarcely any digression. Some of the concluding lines, however, are eminently beautiful; yet it is not easy to say what moral effect the author meant to produce by them. If Man's folly is equally conspicuous in all he does; if his weaknesses are made the instruments of his happiness; if "in folly's cup still laughs the bubble joy," and "not a vanity was given in vain," it would seem very fruitless to attempt by artificial wisdom to correct the designed and inherent defects of our nature.

The third epistle begins by assuming, as the result of what has preceded, "that the Deity acts to one end, though by various laws:" in other words, his aim is the production of general good, but by different, and sometimes apparently opposite, means; of which, instances have been given in the various passions and propensities of Mankind. The author next, in the superior strain of poetry, resumes a former topic, and shows how all the parts of nature, by an universal chain of connection, contribute to the advantage of each other, and of the whole. He again, likewise, by various striking examples, aims at mortifying that pride of Man which induces him to regard the whole creation as made for his sake alone; and he exhibits the benefits which even the animals subjected to human dominion are made to derive from it. These reflections lead him to mark the limits between reason an[illegible]t; and in various beautiful instances he exemplifies [illegible] on of the latter principle, always exactly adapted to [illegible], an[illegible]hing further. In Man, as in other animals, [illegible] no[illegible] instinct, is the origin of the conjugal and [illegible]n; but in the human creature, reason takes [illegible]longs the union thus formed, and carries [illegible]tion of all the charities of life. Hence the of mankind," namely, themselves; yet it cannot be said that the bold contrast drawn between the powers of the human mind, on the one part, and its weakness on the other, is highly encouraging. If Newton, with the wonderful reach of his intellectual faculties, were unable to "describe or fix one movement of his mind," what other man may hope for success in an investigation of his own nature? 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The poet here admits that notion of the ancient moralists, which supposes the limits of virtue and vice to be blended in such a manner, as to render it impossible to say where one ends and the other begins; or rather, which makes every vice only the extreme of some virtue. Thus, that ruling passion which is in some instances our leading vice, is in others our leading virtue; and every Man is both virtuous and vicious in degree. He concludes with showing how, in the scheme of Providence, the different passions, propensities, follies and defects of Men, are all made to conspire to the general good—how the ties of mutual aid and interest are by their means drawn more closely—and how at length they reconcile Man to the loss of a being so full of imperfection. 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The fourth epistle opens with an eloquent address to happiness, the search after which is its interesting subject. The poet, after finding that happiness is fixed to no one spot or condition of life, soon comes to the conclusion that it belongs equally to all. He finds, too, that a man cannot be made happy without the participation of others; and therefore, "happiness subsists not in the good of one, but of all." Order, "Heaven's first law," has made differences of rank and endowments among mankind necessary; but it does not thence follow that there must be the same inequality in point of happiness. The essential goods of life are all included in "health, peace, and competence," of which the two former consist with virtue alone. The gifts of fortune belong equally to the good and bad, but the former are best qualified to enjoy them. These positions lead the author to a very feeling eulogy on virtue, the influence of which in bestowing bliss is such, that there was no necessity of exempting the good man from the common ills of life, or of elevating him to a superiority of condition. This strain of reasoning is succeeded by a splendid amplification of the philosophical doctrine, that honour and shame arise from no particular station, but that all true glory proceeds from well filling the allotted part, whatever it may be. The poet pursues difference of fortune through all the circumstances of title, birth, rank, fame, and parts; and proves, by a variety of illustrious examples, how insufficient without virtue are advantages in all these respects to secure felicity. Concluding these illustrations with the fundamental truth, that "virtue alone is happiness below," he recurs to his former doctrine of the conversion of self-love to social; and he deduces the principle of universal benevolence from the progress to be traced in the mind of the virtuous man through the several stages and degrees of partial affection. With this, he unites the hope of renovated happiness in a future state; and thus completes the scale of man's supreme felicity, as connected with the greatest elevation of virtue. A most finished and beautiful apostrophe to his "guide, philosopher, and friend," with a brief summary of the topics of the several epistles, terminates the poem.

From the preceding analysis of the Essay on Man, the reader will probably find himself at a loss to deduce that exquisite chain of argumentation, that lucid method, which are with so much evident labour attempted to be traced out by the Right Reverend commentator. He will rather discern a writer, made a system-builder by accident, but a poet by nature, taking up a grand and copious topic, well adapted in parts for the display of his genius, but as a whole belonging to a very different class of composers. He will see him exhibiting a great variety of powers according to the exigencies of his subject; sometimes close, concise, nervous, and sententious; sometimes copious, expansive, and brilliant;—now enchanting by elegance and beauty, now commanding by dignity and sublimity. The work itself he will probably esteem as one of the noblest productions, not only of its author, but of English poetry; and amidst all its defects, he will rejoice that the writer was induced to exercise his talents in a walk so new, and in many respects so well suited to them. In fine, if he does not choose to derive his *ethical system* from the Essay on Man, he will again and again have recourse to it as a storehouse of great and generous sentiments; and he will never rise from its perusal without feeling his mind animated with the love of virtue, and improved in benevolence towards his fellow creatures, and piety towards his Creator.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

PLAN AND CHARACTER

OF

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

WHEN a work of art to masterly execution adds novelty of design, it demands not only a cursory admiration, but such a mature inquiry into the principles upon which it has been formed, as may determine how far it deserves to be received as a model for future attempts in the same walk. Originals are always rare productions. The performances of artists in general, even of those who stand high in their respective classes, are only imitations; which have more or less merit, in proportion to the degree of skill and judgment with which they copy originals more or less excellent. A good original, therefore, forms an æra in the art itself; and the history of every art divides itself into periods comprehending the intervals between the appearance of different approved originals. Sometimes, indeed, various models of a very different cast may exercise the talents of imitators during a single period; and this will more frequently be the case, as arts become more generally known and studied; difference of taste being always the result of liberal and varied pursuit.

How strongly these periods are marked in the history of Poetry, both ancient and modern, a cursory view will suffice to show. The scarcity of originals here is universally acknowledged and lamented, and the present race of poets are thought particularly chargeable with this defect. It ought, however, to be allowed in their favour, that if genius has declined, taste has improved; and that if they imitate more, they choose better models to copy after.

That Thomson's Seasons is the original whence our modern descriptive poets have derived that more elegant and correct style of painting natural objects which distinguishes them from their immediate predecessors, will, I think, appear evident to one who examines their several casts and manners. That none of them, however, have yet equalled their master; and that his performance is an exquisite piece, replete with beauties of the most engaging and delightful kind; will be sensibly felt by all of congenial taste:—and perhaps no poem was ever composed which addressed itself to the feelings of a greater number of readers. It is, therefore, on every account an object well worthy the attention of criticism; and an inquiry into the peculiar nature of its plan and the manner of its execution may be an agreeable introduction to a re-perusal of it in the elegant edition now offered to the public.

The description of such natural objects as by their beauty, grandeur, or novelty, agreeably impress the imagination, has, at all times, been a principal and favourite occupation of Poetry. Various have been the methods in which such descriptions have been introduced. They have been made subservient to the purposes of ornament and illustration, in the more elevated and abstracted kinds of Poetry, by being used as objects of similitude. They have constituted a pleasing and necessary part of epic narration, when employed in forming a scenery suitable to the events. The simple tale of pastoral life could scarcely without their aid be rendered in any degree interesting. The precepts of an art, and the systems of philosophers, depend upon the adventitious ornaments afforded by them for almost every thing which can render them fit subjects for poetry.

Thus intermixed as they are with almost all, and essential to some species of poetry, it was however thought that they could not legitimately constitute the whole, or even the principal part, of a capital piece. Something of a more solid nature was required as the ground-work of a poetical fabric; *pure description* was opposed to *sense;* and binding together the wild flowers which grew obvious to common sight and touch, was deemed a trifling and unprofitable amusement.

Such was the state of critical opinion, when Thomson published, in succession, but not in their present order,* the pieces which compose his *Seasons;* the first capital work in which natural description was professedly the principal object. To paint the face of nature as changing through the changing seasons; to mark the approaches and trace the progress of these vicissitudes, in a series of landscapes all formed upon images of grandeur or beauty; and to give animation and variety to the whole by interspersing manners and incidents suitable to the scenery; appears to be the general design of this poem. Essentially different from a didactic piece, its *business* is to describe, and the occupation of its *leisure* to teach. And as in the *Georgics*, whenever the poet has for a while, borne away by the warmth of fancy, wandered through the flowery wilds of description, he suddenly checks himself, and returns to the toils of the husbandman; so Thomson, in the midst of his delightful lessons of morality, and affecting relations, recurs to a view of that state of the season which introduced the digression.

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* They appeared in the following order: *Winter*, *Summer*, *Spring*, *Autumn.*

It is an attention to this leading idea, that in this piece there is a progressive series of descriptions, all tending to a certain point, and all parts of a general plan, which alone can enable us to range through the vast variety and quick succession of objects presented in it, with any clear conception of the writer's method, or true judgment concerning what may be regarded as forwarding his main purpose, or as merely ornamental deviation. The particular elucidation of this point will constitute the principal part of the present Essay.

Although each of the *Seasons* appears to have been intended as a complete piece, and contains within itself the natural order of beginning, middle, and termination, yet, as they were at length collected and modelled by their author, they have all a mutual relation to each other, and concur in forming a more comprehensive whole. The annual space in which the earth performs its revolution round the sun is so strongly marked by nature for a perfect period, that all mankind have agreed in forming their computations of time upon it. In all the temperate climates of the globe, the four seasons are so many progressive stages in this circuit, which, like the acts in a well constructed drama, gradually disclose, ripen, and bring to an end the various busisiness transacted on the great theatre of nature. The striking analogy which this period with its several divisions bears to the course of human existence, has been remarked and pursued by writers of all ages and countries. Spring has been represented as the youth of the year—the season of pleasing hope, lively energy, and rapid increase. Summer has been resembled to perfect manhood—the season of steady warmth, confirmed strength, and unremitting vigour. Autumn, which, while it bestows the rich products of full maturity, is yet ever hastening to decline, has been aptly compared to that period, when the man, mellowed by age, yields the most valuable fruits of experience and wisdom, but daily exhibits increasing symptoms of decay. The cold, cheerless, and sluggish Winter has almost without a metaphor been termed the decrepit and hoary old age of the year. Thus the history of the year, pursued through its changing seasons, is that of an individual, whose existence is marked by a progressive course from its origin to its termination. It is thus represented by our poet: this idea preserves an unity and connection through his whole work; and the accurate observer will remark a beautiful chain of circumstances in his description, by which the birth, vigour, decline, and extinction of the vital principle of the year are pictured in the most lively manner.

This order and gradation of the whole runs, as has been already hinted, through each division of the poem. Every season has its incipient, confirmed, and receding state, of which its historian ought to give distinct views, arranged according to the succession in which they appear. Each, too, like the prismatic colours, is indistinguishably blended in its origin and termination with that which precedes and which follows it; and it may be expected from the pencil of an artist to hit off these mingled shades so as to produce a pleasing and picturesque effect. Our poet has not been inattentive to these circumstances in the conduct of his plan. His *Spring* begins with a view of the season as yet unconfirmed, and partaking of the roughness of Winter;* and it is not till after several steps in gradual progression, that it breaks forth in all its ornaments, as the favourite of Love and Pleasure. His *Autumn*, after a rich prospect of its bounties and splendours, gently fades into "the sere, the yellow leaf," and with the lengthened night, the clouded sun, and the rising storm, sinks into the arms of Winter. It is remarkable, that in order to produce something of a similar effect in his *Summer*, a season which, on account of its uniformity of character, does not admit of any strongly marked gradations, he has comprised the whole of his description within the limits of a single day, pursuing the course of the sun from its rising to its setting. A Summer's day is, in reality, a just model of the entire season. Its beginning is moist and temperate; its middle, sultry and parching; its close, soft and refreshing. By thus exhibiting all the vicissitudes of Summer under one point of view, they are rendered much more striking than could have been done in a series of feebly contrasted and scarcely distinguishable periods.

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* A descriptive piece, in which this very interval of time is represented, with all the accuracy of a naturalist, and vivid colouring of a poet, has lately appeared in a poem of Mr. Warton's, entitled *The first of April.*

With this idea of the general plan of the whole work, and of its several parts, we proceed to take a view of the various subjects composing the descriptive series of which it principally consists.

Every grand and beautiful appearance in nature, that distinguishes one portion of the annual circuit from another, is a proper source of materials for the *poet of the Seasons.* Of these, some are obvious to the common observer, and require only justness and elegance of taste for the selection: others discover themselves only to the mind opened and enlarged by science and philosophy. All the knowledge we acquire concerning natural objects by such a train of observation and reasoning as merits the appellation of science, is comprehended under the two divisions of *Natural Philosophy* and *Natural History.* Both of these may be employed to advantage in descriptive poetry: for although it be true, that poetical composition, being rather calculated for amusement than instruction, and addressing itself to the many who feel, rather than to the few who reason, is improperly occupied about the abstruse and argumentative parts of a science; yet, to reject those grand and beautiful ideas which a philosophical view of nature offers to the mind, merely because they are above the comprehension of vulgar readers, is surely an unnecessary degradation of this noble art. Still more narrow and unreasonable is that critical precept, which, in conformity to the received notion that fiction is the soul of poetry, obliges the poet to adopt ancient errors in preference to modern truths; and this even where truth has the advantage in point of poetical effect. In fact, modern philosophy is as much superior to the ancient in sublimity as in solidity; and the most vivid imagination cannot paint to itself scenes of grandeur equal to those which cool science and demonstration offer to the enlightened mind. Objects so vast and magnificent as planets rolling with even pace through their orbits, comets rushing along their devious track, light springing from its unexhausted source, mighty rivers formed in their subterranean beds, do not require or even admit, a heightening from the fancy. The most faithful pencil here produces the noblest pictures; and Thomson, by strictly adhering to the character of the *poet of nature,* has treated all these topics with a true sublimity, which a writer of less knowledge and accuracy could never have attained. The strict propriety with which subjects from Astronomy and the other parts of Natural Philosophy are introduced into a poem describing the changes of the Seasons, need not be insisted on, since it is obvious that the primary cause of all these changes is to be sought in principles derived from these sciences. They are the ground work of the whole; and establish that connected series of cause and effect, upon which all those appearances in nature depend, from whence the descriptive poet draws his materials.

Natural History, in its most extensive signification, includes every observation relative to the distinctions, resemblances, and changes of all the bodies, both animate and inanimate, which nature offers to us. These observations, however, deserve to be considered as part of a science only when they refer to some general truth, and form a link of that vast chain which connects all created being in one grand system. It was my attempt in an Essay lately published,* to show how necessary a more accurate and scientific survey of natural objects than has usually been taken, was to the avoiding the common defects, and attaining the highest beauties, of descriptive poetry; and some of the most striking examples of excellence arising from this source were extracted from the poem now before us. It will be unnecessary here to recapitulate the substance of these remarks, or to mark out singly the several passages of our author which display his talents for description to the greatest advantage. Our present design rather requires such a general view of the materials he has collected, and the method in which he has arranged them, as may show in what degree they forward and coincide with the plan of his work.

The correspondence between certain changes in the animal and vegetable tribes, and those revolutions of the heavenly bodies which produce the vicissitudes of the Seasons, is the foundation of an alliance between Astronomy and Natural History, that equally demands attention as a matter of curious speculation, and of practical utility. The astronomical calendar, filled up by the naturalist, is a combination of science at the same time pregnant with important instruction to the husbandman, and fertile in grand and pleasing objects to the poet and philosopher. Thomson seems constantly to have kept in view a combination of this kind; and to have formed from it such an idea of the *œconomy of nature*, as enabled him to preserve a regularity of method and uniformity of design through all the variety of his descriptions. We shall attempt to draw out a kind of historical narrative of his progress through the Seasons, as far as this order is observable.

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* Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry.

Spring is characterised as the season of the renovation of nature; in which animals and vegetables, excited by the kindly influence of returning warmth, shake off the torpid inaction of Winter, and prepare for the continuance and increase of their several species. The vegetable tribes, as more independent and self provided, lead the way in this progress. The poet, accordingly, begins with representing the reviviscent plants emerging, as soon as genial showers have softened the ground, in numbers "beyond the power of botanist to reckon up their tribes." The opening blossoms and flowers soon call forth from their winter retreats those industrious insects which derive sustenance from their nectareous juices. As the beams of the sun become more potent, the larger vegetables, shrubs and trees, unfold their leaves; and as soon as a friendly concealment is by their means provided for the various nations of the feathered race, they joyfully begin the course of laborious but pleasing occupations, which are to engage them during the whole season. The delightful series of pictures, so truly expressive of that genial spirit that pervades the Spring, which Thomson has formed on the variety of circumstances attending the *passion of the groves*, cannot escape the notice and admiration of the most negligent eye. Affected by the same soft influence, and equally indebted to the renewed vegetable tribes for food and shelter, the several kinds of quadrupeds are represented as concurring in the celebration of this charming Season with conjugal and parental rites. Even man himself, though from his social condition less under the dominion of physical necessities, is properly described as partaking of the general ardour. Such is the order and connection of this whole book, that it might well pass for a commentary upon a most beautiful passage in the philosophical poet Lucretius; who certainly wanted nothing but a better system and more circumscribed subject, to have appeared as one of the greatest masters of description in either ancient or modern poetry. Reasoning on the unperishable nature, and perpetual circulation, of the particles of matter, he deduces all the delightful appearances of Spring from the seeds of fertility which descend in the vernal showers.

——— pereunt imbres, ubi eos pater Æther
In gremium matris Terrai præcipitavit.
At nitidæ surgunt fruges, ramique virescunt
Arboribus; crescunt ipsæ, fœtuque gravantur:
Hinc alitur porro nostrum genus atque ferarum:
Hinc lætas urbeis pueris florere videmus,
Frundiferasque novis avibus canere undique sylvas.
Hinc fessæ pecudes pingues per pabula læta
Corpora deponunt, et candens lacteus humor
Uberibus manat distentis; hinc nova proles
Artubus infirmis teneras lasciva per herbas
Ludit, lacte mero menteis percussa novellas.

Lucret. *lib.* 1. 251. &c.

The rains are lost, when Jove descends in showers
Soft on the bosom of the parent earth:
But springs the shining grain; their verdant robe
The trees resume; they grow, and pregnant bend
Beneath their fertile load: hence kindly food
The living tribes receive; the cheerful town
Beholds its joyous bands of flowering youth;
With new-born songs the leafy groves resound;
The full-fed flocks amid the laughing meads
Their weary bodies lay, while wide distent
The plenteous udder teems with milky juice;
And o'er the grass, as their young hearts beat high,
Swell'd by the pure and generous streams they drain,
Frolic the wanton lambs with joints infirm.

The period of Summer is marked by fewer and less striking changes in the face of Nature. A soft and pleasing languor, interrupted only by the gradual progression of the vegetable and animal tribes towards their state of maturity, forms the leading character of this season. The active fermentation of the juices, which the first access of genial warmth had excited, now subsides; and the increasing heats rather inspire faintness and inaction than lively exertions. The insect race alone seem animated with peculiar vigour under the more direct influence of the sun; and are therefore with equal truth and advantage introduced by the poet to enliven the silent and drooping scenes presented by the other forms of animal nature. As this source, however, together with whatever else our summers afford, is insufficient to furnish novelty and business enough for this act of the drama of the year, the poet judiciously opens a new field, profusely fertile in objects suited to the glowing colours of descriptive poetry. By an easy and natural transition, he quits the chastised summer of our temperate clime for those regions where a perpetual summer reigns, exalted by such superior degrees of solar heat as give an entirely new face to almost every part of nature. The terrific grandeur prevalent in some of these, the exquisite richness and beauty in others, and the novelty in all, afford such a happy variety for the poet's selection, that we need not wonder if some of his noblest pieces are the product of this delightful excursion. He returns, however, with apparent satisfaction to take a last survey of the softer summer of our island; and after closing the prospect of terrestrial beauties, artfully shifts the scene to celestial splendours, which, though perhaps not more striking in this season than in some of the others, are now alone agreeable objects of contemplation in a northern climate.

Autumn is too eventful a period in the history of the year within the temperate parts of the globe, to require foreign aid for rendering it more varied and interesting. The promise of the Spring is now fulfilled. The silent and gradual process of maturation is completed; and human industry beholds with triumph the rich products of its toil. The vegetable tribes disclose their infinitely various forms of *fruit;* which term, while, with respect to common use it is confined to a few peculiar modes of fructification, in the more comprehensive language of the naturalist includes every product of vegetation by which the rudiments of a future progeny are developed, and separated from the parent plant. These are in part collected and stored up by those animals for whose sustenance during the ensuing sleep of nature they are provided. The rest, furnished with various contrivances for dissemination, are scattered, by the friendly winds which now begin to blow, over the surface of that earth which they are to clothe and decorate. The young of the animal race, which Spring and Summer had brought forth and cherished, having now acquired sufficient vigour, quit their concealments, and offer themselves to the pursuit of the carnivorous among their fellow-animals, and of the great destroyer, man. Thus the scenery is enlivened with the various sports of the hunter; which, however repugnant they may appear to that system of general benevolence and sympathy which philosophy would inculcate, have ever afforded a most agreeable exertion to the human powers, and have much to plead in their favour as a necessary part of the great plan of Nature. Indeed, she marks her intention with sufficient precision, by refusing to grant any longer those friendly shades which had grown for the protection of the infant offspring. The grove loses its honours; but before they are entirely tarnished, an adventitious beauty, arising from that gradual decay which loosens the withering leaf, gilds the autumnal landscape with a temporary splendour, superior to the verdure of Spring, or the luxuriance of Summer. The infinitely various and ever-changing hues of the leaves at this season, melting into every soft gradation of tint and shade, have long engaged the imitâtion of the painter, and are equally happy ornaments in the description of the poet.

These unvarying symptoms of approaching Winter now warn several of the winged tribes to prepare for their aërial voyage to those happy climates of perpetual summer, where no deficiency of food or shelter can ever distress them; and about the same time, other fowls of hardier constitution, which are contented with escaping the iron winters of the arctic regions, arrive to supply the vacancy. Thus the striking scenes afforded by that wonderful part of the œconomy of Nature, the migration of birds, present themselves at this season to the poet. The thickening fogs, the heavy rains, the swoln rivers, while they deform this sinking period of the year, add new subjects to the pleasing variety wich reigns throughout its whole course, and which justifies the poet's character of it, as the season when the Muse "best exerts her voice."

Winter, directly opposite as it is in other respects to Summer, yet resembles it in this, that it is a season in which Nature is employed rather in secretly preparing for the mighty changes which it successively brings to light, than in the actual exhibition of them. It is therefore a period equally barren of events; and has still less of animation than Summer, inasmuch as lethargic insensibility is a state more distant from vital energy than the languor of indolent repose. From the fall of the leaf, and withering of the herb, an unvarying death-like torpor oppresses almost the whole vegetable creation, and a considerable part of the animal, during this entire portion of the year. The whole insect race, which filled every part of the Summer landscape with life and motion, are now either buried in profound sleep, or actually no longer exist, except in the unformed rudiments of a future progeny. Many of the birds and quadrupeds are retired to concealments, from which not even the calls of hunger can force them; and the rest, intent only on the preservation of a joyless being, have ceased to exert those powers of pleasing, which, at other seasons, so much contribute to their mutual happiness, as well as to the amusement of their human sovereign. Their social connections, however, are improved by their wants. In order the better to procure their scanty subsistence, and resist the inclemencies of the sky, they are taught by instinct to assemble in flocks, and this provision has the secondary effect of gratifying the spectator with something of novelty and action even in the dreariness of a wintry prospect.

But it is in the extraordinary changes and agitations which the elements, and the surrounding atmosphere undergo during this season, that the poet of nature must principally look for relief from the gloomy uniformity reigning through other parts of the creation. Here scenes are presented to his view, which, were they less frequent, must strike with wonder and admiration the most incurious spectator. The effects of cold are more sudden, and in many instances more extraordinary and unexpected, than those of heat. He who has beheld the vegetable productions of even a northern Summer, will not be greatly amazed at the richer and more luxuriant, but still resembling growths of the tropics. But one who has always been accustomed to view water in a liquid and colourless state, cannot form the least conception of the same element as hardened into an extensive plain of solid crystal, or covering the ground with a robe of the purest white. The highest possible degree of astonishment must therefore attend the first view of these phenomena; and as in our temperate climate but a small portion of the year affords these spectacles, we find that, even here, they have novelty enough to excite emotions of agreeable surprise. But it is not to novelty alone that they owe their charms. Their intrinsic beauty is, perhaps, individually superior to that of the gayest objects presented by the other seasons. Where is the elegance and brilliancy that can compare with that which decorates every tree or bush on the clear morning succeeding a night of hoar frost? Or what is the lustre that would not appear dull and tarnished in competition with a field of snow just glazed over with frost? By the vivid description of such objects as these, contrasted with the savage sublimity of storms and tempests, our poet has been able to produce a set of winter landscapes, as engaging to the fancy as the apparently happier scenes of genial warmth and verdure.

But he has not trusted entirely to these resources for combating the natural sterility of Winter. Repeating the pleasing artifice of his Summer, he has called in foreign aid, and has heightened the scenery with grandeur and horror not our own. The famished troops of wolves pouring from the Alps; the mountains of snow rolling down the precipices of the same regions; the dreary plains over which the Laplander urges his rein-deer; the wonders of the icy sea, and volcanoes "flaming through a waste of snow;" are objects judiciously selected from all that Nature presents most singular and striking in the various domains of boreal cold and wintry desolation.

Thus have we attempted to give a general view of those materials which constitute the groundwork of a poem on the Seasons; which are essential to its very nature; and on the proper arrangement of which its regularity and connection depend. The extent of knowledge, as well as the powers of description, which Thomson has exhibited in this part of his work, is, on the whole, truly admirable; and though, with the present advanced taste for accurate observation in natural history, some improvements might be suggested, yet he certainly remains unrivalled in the list of descriptive poets.

But the rural landscape is not solely made up of land, and water, and trees, and birds, and beasts; *man* is a distinguished figure in it; his multiplied occupations and concerns introduce themselves into every part of it; he intermixes even in the wildest and rudest scenes, and throws a life and interest upon every surrounding object. *Manners* and *character*, therefore, constitute a part even of a descriptive poem; and in a plan so extensive as the history of the year, they must enter under various forms, and upon numerous occasions.

The most obvious and appropriated use of human figures in pictures of the Seasons, is the introduction of them to assist in marking out the succession of annual changes by their various labours and amusements. In common with other animals, man is directed in the diversified employment of earning a toilsome subsistence by an attention to the vicissitudes of the seasons; and all his diversions in the simple state of rustic society are also regulated by the same circumstance. Thus a series of moving figures enlivens the landscape, and contributes to stamp on each scene its peculiar character. The shepherd, the husbandman, the hunter, appear in their turns; and may be considered as natural concomitants of that portion of the yearly round which prompts their several occupations.

But it is not only the bodily pursuits of man which are affected by these changes; the sensations and affections of his mind are almost equally under their influence: and the result of the whole, as forming the enamoured votary of Nature to a peculiar cast of character and manners, is not less conspicuous. Thus the poet of the Seasons is at liberty, without deviating from his plan, to descant on the varieties of moral constitution, and the powers which external causes are found to possess over the temper of the soul. He may draw pictures of the pastoral life in all its genuine simplicity; and, assuming the tone of a moral instructor, may contrast the peace and felicity of innocent retirement, with the turbulent agitations of ambition and avarice.

The various incidents, too, upon which the simple tale of rural events is founded, are very much modelled by the difference of seasons. The catastrophies of Winter differ from those of Summer; the sports of Spring from those of Autumn. Thus, little history pieces and adventures, whether pathetic or amusing, will suggest themselves to the poet; which, when properly adapted to the scenery and circumstances, may very happily coincide with the main design of the composition.

The bare enumeration of these several occasions of introducing draughts of human life and manners, will be sufficient to call to mind the admirable use which Thomson, throughout his whole poem, has made of them. He, in fact, never appears more truly inspired with his subject, than when giving birth to those sentiments of tenderness and beneficence, which seem to have occupied his whole heart. An universal benevolence, extending to every part of the animal creation, manifests itself in almost every scene he draws; and the rural character, as delineated in his feelings, contains all the softness, purity, and simplicity, that are feigned of the golden age. Yet, excellent as the moral and sentimental part of his work must appear to every congenial mind, it is, perhaps, that in which he may the most easily be rivalled. A refined and feeling heart may derive from its own proper sources a store of corresponding sentiment, which will naturally clothe itself in the form of expression best suited to the occasion. Nor does the invention of those simple incidents which are most adapted to excite the sympathetic emotions, require any great stretch of fancy. The nearer they approach to common life, the more certainly will they produce their effect. Wonder and surprise are affections of so different a kind, and so distract the attention, that they never fail to diminish the force of the pathetic. On these accounts, writers much inferior in respect to the powers of description and imagery, have equalled our poet in elegant and benevolent sentiment, and perhaps excelled him in interesting narration. Of these, it will be sufficient to mention the ingenious author of a French poem on the Seasons; who, though a mere copyist in the descriptive parts, has made many pleasing additions to the manners and incidents proper for such a composition.

But there is a strain of sentiment of a higher and more digressive nature, with which Thomson has occupied a considerable portion of his poem. The fundamental principles of moral philosophy, ideas concerning the origin and progress of government and civilisation, historical sketches, and reviews of the characters most famous in ancient and modern history, are interspersed through the various parts of the Seasons. The manly, liberal, and enlightened spirit which this writer breathes in all his works, must ever endear him to the friends of truth and virtue; and, in particular, his genuine patriotism and zeal in the cause of liberty will render his writings always estimable to the British reader. But, just and important as his thoughts on these topics may be, there may remain a doubt in the breast of the critic, whether their introduction in a piece like this do not, in some instances, break in upon that unity of character which every work of art should support. We have seen, from the general plan and tenor of the poem, that it is professedly of the rural cast. The objects it is chiefly conversant with are those presented by the hand of nature, not the products of human art; and when man himself is introduced as a part of the group, it would seem that, in conformity to the rest, he ought to be represented in such a state only, as the simplest forms of society, and most unconstrained situations in it, exhibit. Courts and cities, camps and senates, do not well accord with sylvan scenery. From the principle of congruity, therefore, a critic might be induced to reject some of these digressive ornaments, though intrinsically beautiful, and doubtless contributing to the elevation and variety of the piece. His judgment in this respect would be a good deal influenced by the manner of their introduction. In some instances, this is so easy and natural, that the mind is scarcely sensible of the deviation; in others it is more abrupt and unartful. As examples of both, we may refer to the passages in which various characters from English and from Grecian and Roman history are displayed. The former, by a happy gradation, is introduced at the close of a delightful piece, containing the praises of Britain; which is itself a kind of digression, though a very apt and seasonable one. The latter has no other connection with the part at which it is inserted, than the very forced and distant one, that, as reading may be reckoned among the amusements appropriated to Winter, such subjects as these will naturally offer themselves to the studious mind.

There is another source of sentiment to the poet of the Seasons, which, while it is superior to the last in real elevation, is also strictly connected with the nature of his work. The genuine philosopher, while he surveys the grand and beautiful objects every where surrounding him, will be prompted to lift his eye to the great cause of all these wonders; the planner and architect of this mighty fabric, every minute part of which so much awakens his curiosity and admiration. The laws by which this being acts, the ends which he seems to have pursued, must excite his humble researches; and in proportion as he discovers infinite power in the means, directed by infinite goodness in the intention, his soul must be wrapt in astonishment, and expanded with gratitude. The *œconomy of Nature* will, to such an observer, be the perfect scheme of an all-wise and beneficent mind; and every part of the wide creation will appear to proclaim the praise of its great author. Thus a new connection will manifest itself between the several parts of the universe; and a new order and design will be traced through the progress of its various revolutions.

Thomson's Seasons is as eminently a religious as it is a descriptive poem. Thoroughly impressed with sentiments of veneration for the author of that assemblage of order and beauty which it was his province to paint, he takes every proper occasion to excite similar emotions in the breast of his readers. Entirely free from the gloom of superstition and the narrowness of bigotry, he every where represents the Deity as the kind and beneficent parent of all his works, always watchful over their best interests, and from seeming evil still educing the greatest possible good to all his creatures. In every appearance of nature he beholds the operation of a divine hand; and regards, according to his own emphatical phrase, each change throughout the revolving year as but the "varied God." This spirit, which breaks forth at intervals in each division of his poem, shines full and concentred in that noble *hymn* which crowns the work. This piece, the sublimest production of its kind since the days of Milton, should be considered as the winding up of all the variety of matter and design contained in the preceding parts; and thus is not only admirable as a separate composition, but is contrived with masterly skill to strengthen the unity and connection of the Great Whole.

Thus is planned and constructed a poem, which, founded as it is upon the unfading beauties of Nature, will live as long as the language in which it is written shall be read. If the perusal of it be in any respect rendered more interesting or instructive by this imperfect Essay, the purpose of the writer will be fully answered.

A COMPARISON

BETWEEN

THOMSON AND COWPER

AS

DESCRIPTIVE POETS.

NO descriptive poem in any language has obtained equal popularity with the *Seasons* of Thomson, a work of which the description of rural nature was the proper subject, while moral and philosophical sentiment was its appendage and decoration. It was happily calculated to please as well those whose imaginations were readily impressed with the sublime and beautiful, as those whose hearts were alive to feelings of tenderness and humanity. It found so many readers, that probably no single circumstance has contributed so much to that love of the country, and taste for the charms of nature, which peculiarly characterise the inhabitants of this island, as the early associations formed by the perusal of this poem. It also, like all popular compositions, drew after it a current of imitation; and it was the model of that exact style of painting which is discernible in the performances of most of our later descriptive and didactic poets.

This style is a distinguishing feature of that very singular and original poem, the *Task*, a work, the numberless beauties of which have acquired it a popularity scarcely inferior to that of the *Seasons;* and have secured it a permanent place among the select productions of English poetry. Whether it is more properly to be arranged in the descriptive or the didactic class, is a question of little moment; but considering it as possessing peculiar excellence in the first of these characters, it may be an interesting topic of critical discussion to compare the different manners of the *Task* and the *Seasons* in the description of natural objects, and to estimate their several merits.

To select a variety of circumstances which shall identify the object, and at the same time present it to the imagination in strong and lively colouring, is the essence of poetical description. The qualities enumerated must not be so lax and general as to apply equally to several species of things (which is the ordinary fault of the oriental manner of delineating;) nor yet so methodically precise as the descriptions in natural history, which are addressed more to the intellect than to the imagination. Grand and sublime objects are best described by a few bold touches; for greatness is lost by being parcelled into minute portions; but objects of beauty and curiosity will bear to be viewed microscopically; and if the particulars are skilfully chosen, the effect is enhanced by distinctness. It is also desirable that the circumstances should be suggested by personal observation; else, the picture will probably be defective in accuracy, or at least will be marked with the faintness of a copy from another's conceptions.

No poetical artist can well venture to draw with minuter strokes than Thomson has done, in the delineations of rural scenery and occupations, which constitute the proper matter or staple of his poem, and which are generally both pleasing to contemplate and happily selected for the purpose of characterising the season. It would be difficult to determine whether the grand or the agreeable objects presented by nature were most congenial to his disposition. If his imagination was captivated by the former, his heart inclined him to the latter, especially to such as called forth kind and benevolent emotions; and as those offered themselves most copiously to his observation, they occur most frequently in his poem. His scenes of sublimity are chiefly taken from the polar and tropical regions, in depicting which, he only transcribes (with a poetical pen and fancy, indeed) the descriptions of travellers. His home scenery seems to have been almost entirely suggested by his own remarks, first made when he was a youth on the banks of the Tweed, and afterwards enlarged when he was a guest or an inhabitant in some of the finest parts of England. As he rejected no objects, however trivial, which could serve to mark the season he was describing, he appears to have thought it incumbent upon him, in order to support the dignity of verse, to intermix the figures and phraseology of the higher kinds of poetry; and to this he was particularly induced by the character of blank verse, in which he composed; for this species, being so little distinguished from prose by its measure, had acquired, in the practice of several eminent writers, an artificial stateliness of diction, more remote from common speech than the usual heroic rhymed couplet. This mixture of high wrought language with a humble topic is one of the peculiar features of Thomson's style in descriptive poetry. A few examples will illustrate the manner of this combination.

In *Summer* a picture is given of hay making, in which, the various operations of that pleasing, rural labour, are minutely represented. The following lines are part of the description:—

> Ev'n stooping age is here, and infant hands
> Trail the long rake, or with the fragrant load
> O'ercharg'd, amid the *kind oppression* roll.
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> ——— all in a row
> Advancing broad, or wheeling round the field,
> They spread the *breathing harvest* to the sun.

In the autumnal scene of the hare hunt, when the poor animal is put up,—

> * * * she springs amazed, and all
> The *savage soul of game* is up at once.

The stag, in similar circumstances,

> Gives *all his swift aërial soul* to flight.

When a herd of cattle has taken alarm from the attack of a swarm of gad flies,

> * * * * tossing the foam
> They scorn the keeper's voice, and scour the plain,
> Thro' *all the bright severity of noon.*

All these quotations afford examples of that abstraction or generalisation which is one of the distinctions of poetical language, and which, when in unison with the subject and the ordinary strain of the diction, often produces a very happy effect. How far it does so in the preceding passages, the reader may determine according to his own feelings. To me, while the two last appear not only excusable, but worthy of admiration, the former give the perception of turgidity and ill applied effort. The following lines in the description of the vintage, afford a singular mixture of vulgar and lofty phraseology :—

> Then comes the *crushing* swain, the *country floats*
> And *foams unbounded* with the *mashy flood*,
> That by degrees fermented and refined,
> Round the *raised nations pours the cup of joy.*

There are few pages of the Seasons which do not present somewhat of this combination of elevated language with common matter, which, whatever critical judgment be passed upon it, must be regarded as characteristic of the author's manner.

Another artifice which he employs to give dignity to a humble topic, is to annex to it moral sentiment, and, as it were, *humanise* the animal natures concerned in the scene. Thus, where he has perhaps descended the lowest,—in his description of a spider catching flies in a window,—this insect is termed

> The *villain* spider * * * cunning and fierce,
> Mixture abhorr'd !

He is afterwards called *the ruffian ;* and the victim fly, *the dreadless wanderer ;* and the whole action is minutely told in a tragical style that would suit the murder of a Duncan or a Clarence. In like manner, the bear, seeking his winter retreat, is endowed with a human soul :—

> * * with stern patience, scorning weak complaint,
> Hardens his breast against assailing want.

Whatever be thought of these particular examples, it is presumed that no reader of sensibility will object to the pleasing details of the *passion of the groves,* though in some instances the writer may have assigned to his feathered pairs feelings which only belong to human lovers.

The frequent use of compound epithets is another circumstance by which Thomson's diction is strongly marked. These are elliptical modes of expression, by means of which, qualities or attributes are annexed to a subject in the most concise form possible. The effect of this compression is often truly poetical,—a striking idea being excited by a single word, which it would take a line to convey in detail. It is, however, a license in language, and when arbitrarily framed, with no regard to grammatical propriety, is apt to give offence to a correct taste. This is the case when the two parts of the compound have no natural connection, or stand in no relation to each other of substantive and attribute, or of cause and effect. Thus, in the Seasons, *blood-happy*, meaning happy in the taste of blood; *thick-nibbling*, standing close and nibbling; *pale-quivering*, pale and quivering; *fair-exposed*, fair and exposed; seem examples of harsh and vicious formation. In many instances, the compounding is effected merely by using an adjective adverbially, as, *wild-throbbing* for wildly throbbing; *loose-floating*, for loosely floating; where too little appears to be gained to justify the license. Upon the whole, Thomson's employment of this device to render language poetical may justly be termed excessive; and it is so characteristic of his style, that Brown, in his "Pipe of Tobacco," has personated this poet chiefly by his compound epithets:—

> * * * * forth issue clouds,
> Thought-thrilling, thirst-inciting clouds around,
> And many-mining fires.

To speak of Thomson generally as a descriptive poet, it may then be said, that in choice of subjects, he rejects none that can be rendered pleasing and impressive, and that he paints with a circumstantial minuteness which gives the objects clear and distinct to the imagination; that with respect to diction, he is usually expressive and energetic, with frequent touches of truly poetic imagery, but occasionally verging to the turgid and cumbrous, particularly when he is desirous of elevating a humble topic by a pomp of phrase. It may be added, that no poet before him ever viewed nature either so extensively or so accurately; and that a benevolent heart, and a soul tutored by philosophy and impressed by the sentiments of a pure and enlarged theology, continually animate his pictures of rural life.

Of the merit of his versification, different ears have judged very different. That his lines sometimes move heavily beneath an overweight of matter, and that they are occasionally harsh and unmelodious, is sufficiently perceptible; but, considering the length of his poem, such defects may be excused; and the general flow of his strain appears to me equal in harmony to that of most composers of blank verse, though rarely attaining excellence. As he is said to have been a very uncouth reader of his own lines, it is probable that his musical perceptions were not remarkably nice.

Thomson still bore the palm of descriptive poetry, and his manner was the principal object of imitation, when Cowper, who had failed of exciting attention by a volume of poems displaying abundant genius, but in a repulsive garb, burst on the public with his *Task*. This work, without professed subject or plan, consists of a mixture of description, chiefly rural, and of moral and religious sentiment, each introduced as it seems to have suggested itself to the mind of the author, with no other connection than casual association. Educated at a public school, and afterwards initiated in the school of the world; of a temper frank and undisguised; naturally inclined to hilarity, but with great inequality of spirits, which at length plunged him into a morbid melancholy, and rendered him the victim of a gloomy and appalling system of religion; kind and benevolent in his feelings, but converted by principle to a keen and caustic censor of life and manners; long consigned to a retirement in which his chief employment and solace was the contemplation of nature; Cowper brought a very extraordinary assemblage of qualities, moral and intellectual, to give direction to a genius of the first order. A free converse with men of the world, and an abhorrence of every thing like affectation, in language as well as in manners, had formed him to a style purely English, not disdaining a mixture of common words, and rendered poetical, not by a lofty cant, but by expressions warmed with the vivid imagery that played before his fancy. Equally minute and circumstantial with Thomson in his mode of description, and by no means fastidious in his choice of subjects, in which he was partly influenced by a strong relish for humour, as well as a taste for the beautiful and sublime, he sometimes paints in a manner resembling the Dutch or Flemish school, but always with touches of the true picturesque. When his subject is low, he is content to leave it so, without any effort to raise it by the ambitious ornaments of artificial diction, secure of interesting his reader by the truth and liveliness of his delineation. Thus, in his picture of the Woodman, which has been happily transferred to canvass, not a word is employed that rises above the matter, yet the language could present no other terms equally expressive:—

> Shaggy and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears,
> And tail cropt short, half-lurcher and half-cur,

His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow, and now with many a frisk
Wide-scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout,
Then shakes his powder'd coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark, nor stops for aught
But now and then, with pressure of his thumb,
T' adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube
That fumes beneath his nose. The trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.

The Carrier, in a snow storm,—

With half-shut eyes, and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm,—

is a draught of the same kind, something more bordering on the Dutch style, but perfect as a copy of reality. In both these passages, words are found which could not have suggested themselves to Thomson, or, if they had, would scarcely have been admitted; yet what reader of true taste would change them? This masculine vigour of vernacular diction, which is characteristic of Cowper's style, and in which it resembles that of Dryden, by no means precludes (any more than it did in that poet) the highest degree of grace and elegance when those qualities are congenial with the subject. What can surpass in gracefulness of language, as well as in beauty of imagery, his enumeration of plants in the flowering-shrubbery?—The tall guelder-rose

——— throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighb'ring cypress. or more sable yew,
Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
That the wind severs from the broken wave.
* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *
* * * * * luxuriant above all
The jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,
The deep dark green of whose unvarnish'd leaf
Makes more conspicuous, and illumines more,
The bright profusion of her scatter'd stars.

If the passage in which these lines are contained be compared with a resembling one in Thomson describing the flowers that blow from early Spring to Summer, it will appear, that whilst the latter poet attempts little more than to annex to each some mark of distinction properly belonging to it, the former associates with the subject of his description some idea of the imagination which enhances its effect by parallelism. Nothing denotes the mind of a poet so much as this operation of the fancy when objects are presented to the external senses.

That Thomson was in general an exact, as well as a minute, observer of nature is evinced in almost every page of the Seasons; yet there are some instances in which Cowper, in touching upon the same circumstances, has displayed superior correctness. Thus, where Thomson, with a truly picturesque selection of incidents, represents the effects of a hard frost, he augments the real wonders of the scene by painting a cascade as if it were congealed into ice at the instant of falling:—

* * * the dumb cascade,
Whose idle torrents only seem to roar.

But this is an impossibility, and is regarded as such by Cowper, who has formed a beautiful frost picture from the opposite appearances. Speaking of a stream stealing away beneath its frozen surface, he says,—

Not so, where scornful of a check, it leaps
The mill-dam, dashes on the restless wheel,
And wantons in the pebbly gulf below.
No frost can bind it there: its utmost force
Can but arrest the light and smoky mist
That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.

In this passage, too, Cowper is more accurate in the silent stealthy flow of the frost-bound stream, than Thomson, who, probably for the sake of poetical effect, represents it as indignantly murmuring at its chains:—

The whole imprison'd river *growls* below.

Cowper's exactness was probably owing to his having been, from his situation, an observer of nature at an advanced period of life, when the novelty of common objects being exhausted, the rural solitary is reduced to pry more closely into surrounding scenes, in order to excite a new interest in them. Hence, his observations are commonly of a more curious and recondite kind than those of Thomson, who usually takes what lies obvious upon the surface of things. Every reader of the Seasons has admired the pleasing description of the red-breast, "paying to trusted man his annual visit:" it is recognised for perfect nature, because every one has witnessed the reality: but few in their winter walks have made those remarks on the same bird which dictated to Cowper the following lines:—

> The red-breast warbles still, but is content
> With slender notes and more than half suppress'd.
> Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
> From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
> From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
> That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.

This picture is equally natural with the former, and has the additional merit of furnishing new images to the fancy. It was from such a mature and deliberate study of nature that Mr. White of Selborne derived that store of curious observation, which he has presented in the most entertaining miscellany of natural history that was ever composed.

Both of these poets occasionally employed personification, which is a kind of abstract and comprehensive description. To the poet of the Seasons it was an obvious piece of mechanism that each should make its entrance as a living figure; distinguished by some characteristic of that portion of the year of which it was the harbinger; but it cannot be said that in these draughts he has displayed much fancy. The epithet of "ethereal Mildness" which he gives to Spring presents no visual image; and it has been justly objected by Miss Seward, that the "showers of shadowing roses" in which she descends is an usurpation upon the property of Summer. To Summer is assigned nothing more than "refulgent youth," and an "ardent look." Autumn has the common bearings of the sickle and wheaten sheaf, with which he, or she, is oddly said to be "crowned:" and Winter is only marked by the qualities of gloom and surliness. The other sketches of personification in his poem are too slight to merit notice.

The case is very different with Cowper. His powerful imagination was equal to those *creative* exertions which are perhaps the highest triumph of poetry; and though his purpose in the Task did not urge him to frequent attempts of this kind, yet he has exhibited specimens which in grandeur and elegance have scarcely ever been surpassed. His personified figures of Winter and of Evening will justify this assertion to every reader susceptible of the charms of pure poetry; and, I think, clearly establish his claims to a higher seat on Parnassus than that occupied by Thomson.

The descriptive matter in the Seasons is diversified by some little history pieces, the subjects of which have a reference to that part of the year in which they are introduced. It is generally admitted that the style of Thomson is little suited to the narrative of common life. Destitute of ease, and wholly unlike the language of real conversation, it proves an awkward vehicle for the dialogue and incidents of story-telling; and though an interest is excited by the pathetic of the circumstances, as in the maid struck by lightning, and the man lost in the snow, it owes nothing to the manner of narration. Cowper, on the contrary, was a master in this style. He perfectly understood common speech, and could readily accommodate his phraseology to his subject. The touching story of Crazy Kate, and the various passages in which he alludes to the melancholy history of his own life, are examples of the natural mode of narration; of which many more instances might be adduced from his other poems.

As the versification of Thomson has been mentioned, it will be proper, by way of comparison, to say something of that of Cowper. His blank verse is in general the apparently negligent effusion of one who, pouring out his thoughts in exuberance, does not long study to put them into measure. But he evidently possessed a musical and practised ear; and his irregularities are not always without design. It is known that in his version of Homer he paid very particular attention to the melody of his lines and its adaptation to the subject; and if, in the Task, his mind was more occupied with the sentiments, there are not wanting passages the flow of which is remarkably harmonious. One example shall suffice for a proof of his talents in this respect:—

> How soft the music of those village bells
> Falling at intervals upon the ear
> In cadence sweet! now dying all away,
> Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
> Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on.

A fine ear is, then, another poetical requisite in which nature seems to have been more liberal to Cowper than to Thomson. It would, perhaps, be easy to quote from the latter, instances in which harsh or appalling sounds are happily imitated, for our language abounds with words which echo tones of that class; but to make English verse "discourse eloquent music" is a much more difficult task.

Such appear to me to be the principal characteristics of these two original poets in that delineation of natural objects and the incidents of rural life, for which both are so justly admired. Thomson is so far entitled to the first place, that if his minute style of painting had not obtained admission into English poetry, the descriptions in the Task would probably never have existed : yet Cowper cannot be denominated an imitator in them, since his manner is entirely his own, and the objects he has represented were evidently suggested by individual observation. Between the two poems no comparison can subsist; for while the Seasons is the completion of an extensive plan, necessarily comprising a great variety of topics, most of which would occur to every poetical mind occupied in the same design ; the Task owes nothing to a preconceived argument, but is the extemporaneous product of the very singular mind and genius of the author. It had no model, and can have no parallel.

AN ESSAY

ON

DR. ARMSTRONG'S

POEM ON THE

ART OF PRESERVING HEALTH.

THE Poems termed *didactic* may be considered as of two kinds. Those to which the term is more properly applied, are such as directly profess to teach some art or science. The other species consists of those which, taking up some speculative topic. establish a theory concerning it by argument and illustration. Of the former kind, many will familiarly occur to the reader's memory; and the piece before us is an example of it. Of the latter, are various philosophical and argumentative pieces, from the poem of Lucretius on the Epicurean system, to Pope's Essay on Man, and Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination. A middle place between the two seems to be occupied by moral poetry which, at the same time that it lays down practical rules for the conduct of life, discusses the theoretical principle on which they are founded.

Now in estimating the respective value of these different products of the poetic art, it will be necessary to begin with considering what poetry essentially is, and what are its powers and purposes. It is, I conceive, essential to poetry that it should present ideas to the imagination, either agreeable of themselves, or rendered so by the clothing and accompaniments given to them. Its leading aim is to please; and its powers are, to a certain degree, to make pleasing what would not be so of itself. If, therefore, by the poet's art, to the main end of giving pleasure, can be associated that of communicating instruction in such a way as will more strongly and agreeably impress it on the mind, its complete purpose may be said to be attained. Delight and profit combined are all that can be wished from the noblest of the fine arts.

But there are subjects, the nature of which renders such a combination scarcely possible, and in which every attempt to produce it, can only yield an incongruous mixture of ill placed ornament and defective instruction. These are especially to be found in those arts of life which depend upon the application of mechanical rules, or the practical skill acquired by experience. To describe the minute processes of manual art in verse, in such a manner as that they shall be understood, is not only a very difficult task, but a wholly fruitless one ; since, after all, the description cannot be so clear and precise as one written in prose, nor can the verse rise to poetry. We may, indeed, admire the skill shown in the attempt to decorate a barren subject, but we must regret that the writer's talents were so ill employed. So obvious is this conclusion, that we may be assured no one ever wrote a didactic poem for the simple purpose of teaching an art. The choice has therefore been dictated by a search after novelty, or the desire of exhibiting a proof of poetical skill. These motives are expressly avowed by Virgil in his Georgics, and are much more probable than the deep political design attributed to that poem, of exciting the Roman nobility to the pursuits of agriculture.

But while perhaps *every* poem strictly didactic labours under the inconvenience of a subject not calculated for displaying the art of poetry in its fairest form, some, both from their nature, and from the manner of treating them, are less defective in this respect than others. Thus, certain arts are closely connected in their theory with large and philosophical views of the system of the universe, or of the principles of the human mind. Some, even, in their practice, afford matter for pleasing description, and admit of easy illustration from the most striking and agreeable objects of external nature. For example, the arts of husbandry are evidently allied to a vast variety of great and interesting topics ; and we all know how advantageously Virgil has employed them as the ground work of one of the most pleasing poems of antiquity. This piece, however, will also serve to show the unfavourable effect of attempting to express matter purely technical in a poetical manner. For no unprejudiced reader will deny, that in many of the preceptive passages, notwithstanding the variety of resources he employs to elevate them into poetry, he is overpowered by his subject, and chained as it were, to the earth he is labouring ;—while on the other hand, as a teacher of the art, he is frequently so obscure, as to have embarrassed the whole race of agricultural and literary critics since his time. It may also be observed, that had he extended his views further into the philosophical part of his subject, and made a full use of the moral and physical variety it was capable of affording, he would not have found it necessary to wander into digressions so remotely connected with his proposed topics, as scarcely to be justified by any reasonable claim of poetic license. For even the semblance of teaching is destroyed by deviations, the manifest purpose of which is to disengage the reader's attention from the main subject, and fix it upon somewhat more captivating to the imagination.

With respect to the piece before us, its subject seems on the whole as happily calculated for didactic poetry, as most of those which have been taken for the purpose. To say that it is a peculiarly proper one for a physician to write upon, is saying nothing of consequence to the reader. But the preservation of health is, in the first place, a matter of general importance, and therefore interesting to readers of every class. Then, although its rules, scientifically considered, belong to a particular profession, and require previous studies for their full comprehension; yet, in the popular use, they are level to the understanding and experience of every man of reading and reflection. Had the subject been more strictly medical, such as the nature and cure of a particular disease, it would have been liable to the objections attending a confined and professional topic; and, like the *Siphylis* of Fracastorius, could scarcely, by the greatest poetical skill, have been rendered generally pleasing or instructive. But every man being in some measure entrusted with the care of his own health, and being accustomed to speculations concerning Air, Diet, Exercise, and the Passions, the subject may be considered as universal. It is true, these topics can be poetically treated only in a popular manner, and the writer who chooses the vehicle of verse in treating of them, must take up with common and perhaps superficial notions. But by associating these notions with images addressed to the imagination, he may convey them in a more agreeable form; and he may advantageously employ the diction of poetry to give to practical rules an energy and conciseness of expression which may forcibly imprint them on the memory. This power is, indeed, the principal circumstance which imparts real utility to didactic poetry; and we all feel its effects on becoming acquainted with the moral and critical works of such authors as Horace, Boileau, and Pope. Further, the topics with which the Art of Health is conversant, are connected with various of the loftiest and most extensive speculations on general nature; and in pursuing the regular vein of thought, many sources of truly poetical ideas may be opened. It remains now to examine how far the author has availed himself of the advantages of his subject, and in what manner he has supported the character of a didactic poet.

As Invocation is an established part of a regular poem, it was necessary that the piece before us should be provided with that decoration. The choice of Hygeia, or the Goddess of Health, for the object of address, was dictated by a very obvious propriety. The manner is imitated from that of Lucretius in his fine invocation of Venus; and much imagination is displayed in the description of her approach, and of the various baleful forms of disease and death that fly from her presence.

Of the sources from which health is drawn, salubrious air is one of the most remarkable. Air, therefore, with propriety, is made the peculiar topic of the first book. Perhaps a descriptive passage of more strength can scarcely be met with than that which enumerates the various contaminations of this element in a crowded city. The ideas, indeed, in their own nature disgusting, might be thought almost too vividly represented, did they not by contrast add to the sweetness of the subsequent rural picture, the effect of which is almost equal to that of the fabled calenture in calling forth irresistible longings after the country. Every reader familiar with the vicinity of the metroplis will feel peculiar pleasure from the glimpses given of those favourite summer retreats, Windsor, Richmond, Dulwich, and Hampstead, which will excite in his mind peculiar images, always much more engaging to the fancy than general ones. The poet next exercises his invention in one of the higher efforts of the art, that of allegorical personification. His figure and genealogy of *Quartana* are well imagined; but like most of those who create these fancy formed beings, he fails in the *agency* he attributes to her; for in merely inspiring a fit of the ague, she acts not as a person, but as an incorporeal cause.

He goes on to describe the different sites unfriendly to health, particularly the too moist and the too dry, which he makes the foundation of what are called in the schools of physic, the phlegmatic and melancholic temperaments. In his instructions how to guard against the evils of different situations, he somewhat anticipates his future topics of diet and exercise. The passage, however, is full of vigorous description; and the means of correcting the watery and the parched soil afford spirited sketches of landscape. But he is no where so minute, as in that perpetual topic of an Englishman, the bad weather under which our island is so frequently submerged. A kind of splenetic strength of painting distinguishes his gloomy draught of loaded skies and eastern blasts, and of that vexatious fickleness of weather, in which all the seasons seem to "mix in every monstrous day."

We are, however, brought into good humour again by the description of cheerful, dry, and sheltered spots in which atmospherical evils may be palliated; and the concluding eulogy on the cheering and invigorating influence of solar heat, leaves the fancy agreeably impressed with a sensation similar to that imparted by a serene summer's day. On the whole, the descriptive beauties of this book are considerable; but as a leading head of his subject, it might I conceive, have been lengthened with advantage, by some circumstances relative to the influence of air upon health, which he has not touched upon. The sudden operation upon the spirits by alterations in the weight of the atmosphere, as indicated by the barometer, and the medicinal effects of change of climate upon invalids, would have afforded matter both for curious discussion, and interesting, and even pathetic, narration.

Diet, the subject of the second book, is, as the writer observes on entering upon it, comparatively barren and unfavourable to poetry. It is evidently more immersed in technical investigations than the former; and its connection with the grossest of the sensual pleasures, renders it difficult to be treated on without derogating from the dignity of a philosophical poem. Dr. Armstrong, however, has managed it with judgment. He begins with a scientific topic, necessary as a foundation for the preceptive part which is to follow—the circulation of the blood. This function, however, admits of easy illustration from the common principles of hydraulics, as displayed in the motion of water through pipes and channels. The constant waste of solid particles that such a perpetual current must produce, demonstrates the necessity for a new supply by means of somewhat taken in. Hence naturally follows the consideration of food, its concoction, and the choice of aliments, solid and fluid, suited to persons of different constitutions and in different climates. This is the general plan of the book. The poet's skill consists in taking the subject out of the language and reasonings of science, familiarising it by apt illustration, and diversifying it by amusing digression. All this he has attempted, and with success.

We shall not closely follow his steps while he treats of the digestibility and salubriousness of different foods, and lays down rules for the regulation of appetite. The subject, as we before hinted, is not of the most pleasing kind, and it is apparently rather from necessity than choice that he enters into it. His expressions and images are strong, but strength so employed is unavoidably a kin to coarseness. A more agreeable topic is the praise of temperance and simple diet, from which he easily slides into a beautiful moral passage, showing how much better riches may be employed than in the luxuries of the table—by relieving indigence and unfriended merit. One line is almost unrivalled in pathetic energy,

> Though hush'd in patient wretchedness at home.

The opposite evils arising from too full and too scanty a diet are next enumerated, and cautions are given respecting the progress from one to the other. The different regimen proper for the several seasons of the year is then touched upon; and this naturally leads the poet to open a new source of variety in description, derived from a view of human life as subsisting in climates removed to the two extremes from our own. The picture of the frigid zone is but slightly sketched; that of the torrid regions is much more minute, and will strongly remind the reader of a similar one by the hand of Thomson; but I dare not assert that it will lose nothing by the comparison. It is rendered less appropriate, by the enumeration of vegetable articles which in reality belong to very different climates; the cocoa and anana being many degrees separated from the countries rich in corn and wine. The cedar of Lebanon, likewise, as a native of the bleak tops of high mountains, ought not to be placed by the side of the palm and plantain.

The succeeding passage, however, which paints the wonders of the Naiad kingdom, though it also has its parallel in the *Seasons*, is not, I think, surpassed by that, or any other poem, in strength and grandeur of description. The awful sublimity of the scenes themselves and the artifice of the poet in introducing himself as a spectator, and marking the supposed impressions on his own mind, elevate this piece to the very summit of descriptive poetry.

The praise of water-drinking follows; with the precepts of the father of physic for choosing rightly this pure and innocent beverage. Notwithstanding the apparent earnestness with which the poet dwells on this topic, there is some reason to suspect that he was not quite hearty in the cause. For he not only adopts the notion of those who have recommended an occasional debauch as a salutary spur to nature; but descanting on the necessity a man may find himself under to practise hard drinking in order to promote the pursuits of ambition or avarice, he advises him (between jest and earnest) to inure himself to the trial by slow degrees. Here the physician and sage seem lost in the jolly companion. He soon, however, resumes those characters; and after remarking the tendency of a continued use of wine to bring on premature old age, he digresses into a theoretical account of the process by which the animal machine is gradually impeded in its motions, and at length comes to a full stop. This conducts him to a striking termination of the book, in a lofty description of the ravages made by time upon the works of human art, and the world itself.

Exercise, the subject of the third book, is a theme more adapted to poetry, and less immersed in professional disquisitions, than that of the preceding. Its benefits in the preservation of health are universally known; and the poet's task is rather to frame upon it pictures agreeable to the imagination, than to treat of it in a closely preceptive or scientific manner. Dr. Armstrong begins with a lively portrait of the rustic, rendered firm and robust by toil, like a sturdy oak of the forest; and he produces him as a specimen of the influence of exercise on the human frame. He then exhorts the votary of health to partake of the various kinds of rural pastime, the walk in all seasons, the chase, and the sport of fishing. This last amusement introduces a very pleasing passage, in which the poet characterises various streams, particularly the Liddel, on whose pastoral banks he first drew breath. The tribute of affection he pays to his native place, and the retrospect of his own boyish years, are sweetly interesting, and vie with all that Thomson and Smollet have written on a similar topic.

The species of exercise afforded by gardening, gives occasion to a moral picture, of a man retired from public life, to the cultivation of his estate, surrounded with a select society of old companions, of the same tastes and pursuits with himself. This is wrought so much in the manner of Thomson, that were it not for some difference of style, it might pass undistinguished as a passage of the Seasons. The "noctes cœnæque deum" of Horace, have contributed to adorn the piece.

Resuming the medical consideration of exercise, he next adverts to its power in strengthening weak parts by habitual exertions; and he dwells on the propriety of a gradual progress from rest to labour, and on the mischiefs attending too violent and heedless toils. This leads him to a serious and pathetic apostrophe on the fatal effects proceeding from exposure to cold, or draughts of cold liquor, when heated, which he represents as the most frequent of all causes of mortal disease. The ancient use of warm baths and unctions after exercise is his next topic, in speaking of which, he finds it necessary to touch upon that important function of the body, insensible perspiration. The strict connection of this with health and disease, according as it is regular or deranged, has been a favourite argument with certain medical schools, and is here briefly illustrated in poetical language. The use of cold bathing in steeling the frame against the inclemencies of a cold climate, and the advantages of frequent ablution in hot ones, and of cleanliness in all, are further subjects of digression.

He returns to the consideration of exercise, as it is limited by recurring changes of the day and year; warning against it while the body is loaded with food, and during the heats of a summer's noon, and the chills of evening. These preceptive remarks lead him to a vein more fertile of ideas addressed to the imagination; for conceiving the day to be sunk into the silence and gloom of midnight, he views the toil-spent hind wrapt in the arms of profound repose, the sweet soother of his labours. Hence he digresses to the subject of dreams, and paints in vivid colours the horrid scenes that disturb the mind during the delirium of unquiet slumber. The proper period in which sleep is to be indulged, with its due measure to different constitutions, are next considered. The influence of habit in this respect, brings on an exhortation to proceed very gradually in altering every corporeal habit; and this is made an introduction to a description of the successive changes of the year, with the distempers they bring. All this, and the remainder of the book, might perhaps with greater propriety have made a part of the first head; since its connection with exercise is less obvious than with air. To introduce in some part of his plan an account of epidemic diseases was, however, evidently proper, both as matter for important instruction respecting the preservation of health, and as affording scope for poetical variety. After some common observations on the diseases of Spring and Autumn, and the means of guarding against them, with a forcible injunction against delay as soon as symptoms of danger appear; the poet proceeds to an imitation of Virgil and Lucretius in the particular description of a pestilence; and he very happily chooses for his subject the Sweating-Sickness which first prevailed in England when the Earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII. came hither on his expedition against the tyrant Richard. So many graphical descriptions in prose and verse have been made of visitations of this kind, that scarcely any source of novelty remained in the *general* circumstances accompanying them. Dr. Armstrong has, therefore, judiciously introduced as much as possible of the *particular* character of this singular distemper, which, as far as we learn, was entirely unknown before, and has never appeared since that period. He has not even rejected certain popular errors prevalent respecting it, which, though they ought carefully to be avoided in a medical treatise, may perhaps be permitted to enhance the wonder of a poetical narration. Such is that, which asserts Englishmen to have been its only victims, both in their own country and abroad—a notion which certainly adds to the interest with which a native of this country reads the relation. The conclusion of this book is a close copy from Virgil in the design, suitably varied in the circumstances. The deaths beyond the Atlantic allude to the unfortunate expedition to Carthagena, a popular topic of complaint at that period.

The title with which the fourth and last book is inscribed, is *the Passions;* but its subject would be more accurately expressed by the influence of the mind over the body—a large and elevated topic, detached from the technical matter of any particular profession, and in its full extent comprising every thing sublime and affecting in moral poetry. The theory of the union of a spiritual principle with the gross corporeal substance, is that which the writer adopts as the basis of his reasonings. It is this ruling power which

> Wields at his will the dull material world,
> And is the body's health or malady.

He evidently confounds, however, (as all writers on this system do) matter of great subtilty, with what is not matter—or spirit. These "viewless atoms," he says, "are lost in thinking," yet thought itself is not the enemy of life, but painful thinking, such as that proceeding from anxious studies, and fretful emotions. To prevent the baneful effects of these, he counsels us frequently to vary our objects, and to join the bodily exercise of reading aloud, to the mental labour of meditation. Solitary brooding over thoughts of a particular kind, such, especially, as pride or fear presents to the imagination, is warned against, in a passage full of energy, as the usual parent of madness or melancholy. Sometimes what the poet terms a *chronic passion*, or one arising from a misfortune which has made a lasting impression, such as the loss of a beloved friend, produces a sympathetic languor in the body, which can only be removed by shifting the scene, and plunging in amusement or business. Some persons, however, take a less innocent method of dispelling grief,

> ————and in the tempting bowl
> Of poison'd nectar sweet oblivion swill.

The immediately exhilirating effects, and the sad subsequent reverse, attending this baneful practice, are here painted in the most vivid colouring, and form a highly instructive and pathetic lesson; in particular, the gradual degradation of character which it infallibly brings on, is finely touched.

A kind of moral lecture succeeds, introduced as the supposed precepts of a sage in human life, whose character is represented as a compound of manly sense and cheerfulness. How to acquire happiness by moderation in the pursuit of pleasure, and by the practice of virtue, is the topic of this passage, which, though certainly digressive, has, however, a natural affinity with the leading subject of the book. Virtue has seldom been characterised with more spirit and dignity; and trite as the sentiments are, the energy with which they are expressed commands attention.

The poet next reverts to his more direct purpose, that of considering the passions in their influence upon bodily health. In general, he lays it down as a rule, that all emotions which are pleasing to the mind, are also salutary to the body. But there are exceptions, some being in their nature prone to hurtful excess; as an instance of which he gives the passion of Love. Here, again, he tries his strength with Thomson, and his description cannot but remind the reader of the fine picture of a love-sick youth drawn by that writer in his Spring. Thomson, however, dwells much more minutely on the mental effects of love. Armstrong, with propriety, fixes the attention more on the changes it induces in the corporeal frame, and this, both as it is a passion, and as it leads to sensual indulgences. With great force, yet with sufficient delicacy, he paints the condition of one unnerved and exhausted by excess in amorous delights. This, indeed, is deviating from the express subject of the book; since love as a passion, and the appetite for sexual enjoyment, are distinct things, the latter being certainly able to subsist without the former, if not the former without the latter. But an insensible gradation led him easily from the one to the other.

The passion of Anger is his next theme, and the bold personification with which he has introduced it, is admirably suited to its violent and precipitate character. A fit of rage has frequently been known at once to overpower the vital faculties, and strike with instant death. To guard against it was therefore a point of peculiar importance; and the poet has presented many striking moral arguments against the indulgence of that habit which makes us prone to ungoverned sallies of this passion. But where reason proves too weak for the control of this and other unruly affections of the mind, to what other power shall we resort for aid? We may, he hints, oppose passion to passion, and extinguish one by its opposite. But without dwelling on this contrivance (which, indeed, is neither very philosophical nor manageable) he proceeds to recognise a power in Nature which may be rendered the universal tranquilliser of the breast; and this power is Music. With a contrasted description of the music which exercises this sympathetic dominion over the emotions, and that which is only the execution of difficult trifles, followed by an allusion to the fabulous stories of some ancient masters, and the praise of the art itself, the poet, somewhat abruptly, closes the book and the work.

From this cursory view of the contents of Dr. Armstrong's piece, it will probably appear, that, together with a sufficient variety for the purpose of amusement, there is uniformity of design enough to constitute the proper character of a didactic poem. Almost every thing essential to the preservation of health is touched upon during its course; and the digressive parts are neither wholly impertinent to the main object, nor do they occupy a disproportionate space. Many topics of an elevated nature are occasionally introduced; and moral sentiment is agreeably interwoven with precept and description. The writer has, apparently, found some difficulty in adhering to the arrangement of his design; for neither are the proposed topics of the four books equally copious of matter, nor has he with precision confined himself to the subjects belonging to each. However, as the *real* intention of such a work is not to afford systematic instruction, but to impress the mind with detached particulars, and to amuse it with variety, objections in point of method are little to be regarded. If this performance on the whole offers a fund of useful advice and rational entertainment to every cultivated reader, and at the same time is in a good degree what it professes to be, it has fulfilled its purpose.

It now remains to consider how far this work is characterised by any peculiarity of style and manner.

English blank verse in its structure approaches so nearly to prose, that they who have employed it on elevated subjects, have adopted a variety of methods to give it the stamp of poetry. Some have transplanted as much as possible of the idiom of the ancient languages into their own. They have used words in uncommon senses, derived rather from etymology than practice; and in the formation of sentences, they have studiously deviated from the natural order, and copied the involutions and inversions of the Latin and Greek. Others have enriched their style with novel terms and compound epithets, and have aimed at an uncommon mode of saying the commonest things. Very different from these is the manner of Armstrong. It is distinguished by its simplicity—by a free use of words which owe their strength to their plainness—by the rejection of ambitious ornaments, and a near approach to common phraseology. His sentences are generally short and easy, his sense clear and obvious. The full extent of his conceptions is taken at the first glance; and there are no lofty mysteries to be unravelled by repeated perusal. What keeps his language from being prosaic, is the vigour of his sentiments. He thinks boldly, feels strongly, and therefore expresses himself poetically. Where the subject sinks, his style sinks with it; but he has for the most part excluded topics incapable either of vivid description, or of the oratory of sentiment. He had from nature a musical ear, whence his lines are scarcely ever harsh, and are usually melodious, though apparently without much study to render them so. Perhaps he has not been careful enough to avoid the monotony of making several successive lines close with a rest or pause in the sense. On the whole, it may not be too much to assert, that no writer in blank verse can be found more free from stiffness and affectation, more energetic without harshness, and more dignified without formality.

AN ESSAY
ON
THE POEMS OF
GREEN.

"MR. MATTHEW GREEN was of a family in good repute amongst the Dissenters, and had his education in the sect. He was a man of approved probity and sweetness of temper and manners. His wit abounded in conversation; and was never known to give the least offence. He had a post in the Custom House, and discharged the duty there with the utmost diligence and ability. He died at the age of forty-one years, at a lodging in Nag's Head Court, Gracechurch Street."—Dodsley's Collection of Poems, vol. 1.

In the productions of poetry, as in those of the other fine arts, not only is consummate excellence in every point which contributes to the perfection of a work extremely rare, but a high degree of it in any one of these points is not frequently to be met with. If, as has been done with respect to painting and music, a scale were to be framed for poetical merit, in which all the principal qualities belonging to the art, such as invention, versification, diction, pathos, and the like, were placed at the head of separate divisions with a number annexed denoting the *maximum* of each,—how few poets could be found who might fairly be said to have reached that highest degree even in one of these; how much fewer, who have approached it in several!

In considering such a scale, it might be a question whether the poet who stood at a medium height in all of the divisions, or he who was at the top in one or two, and near the bottom in the rest, were the *better artist*; but it could be no question whether the latter or the former were the *greater genius*. Excellence in one point will ever deserve a praise, to which mediocrity in many cannot arrive; and though its productions may afford less of the calm delight received from performances in which taste and skill secure moderate satisfaction and preclude disgust, yet they will better deserve the study and admiration of a true lover of the art.

It would be easy to enumerate various works of English poetry possessed of this partial or disproportionate excellence; and several of them maintain their place as acknowledged specimens of true genius, though perhaps they are more admired than read. But the celebrity of writers depends much upon accidental circumstances; and if, in particular, we examine the share of fame obtained by our *minor poets*, whose performances have not *mass* enough to fill a considerable space in the public eye, we shall find it very far from commensurate with their proportion of merit. Besides the advantages bestowed by high patronage and connections, and the praise of cotemporaries of name and reputation, there are certain merits more obvious to the generality of readers than others of a superior order, as well as certain topics more popular and interesting than others. Thus it has happened, that the soft and harmonious elegies of Hammond, referring to a passion familiar to all the readers of poetry, and replete with sentiments pleasing and natural, though none of them original to the writer, and sometimes bordering on triteness and insipidity—have had much more fortune in the world than the pieces of Green, distinguished as they are by brilliancy and originality of thought, but singular in their subject and somewhat uncouth in their manner.

The writer before us was neither by education nor situation in life qualified to attain skill in those constituent parts of poetical composition upon which much of its elegance and beauty depend. He had not, like a Gray or a Collins, his mind early fraught with all the stores of classic literature; nor could he devote months and years of learned leisure to the exquisite charms of versification or the refined ornaments of diction. He was a man of business, who had only the intervals of his regular employment to improve his mind by reading and reflection; and his poems appear to have been truly no more than hasty effusions for the amusement of himself and his particular friends. Numbers of works thus produced are born and die in the circle of every year; and it is only by the stamp of real genius that these have been preserved from a similar fate. But nature had bestowed on the author a strong and quick conception, and a wonderful power of bringing together remote ideas so as to produce the most novel and striking effects. No man ever thought more copiously or with more orginality; no man ever less fell into the beaten track of common place ideas and expressions. That cant of poetical phraseology which is the only resource of an ordinary writer, and which those of a superior class find it difficult to avoid, is scarcely any where to be met with in him. He has no hackneyed combinations of substantives and epithets; none of the tropes and figures of a school boy's Gradus. Often negligent, something inaccurate, and not unfrequently prosaic, he redeems his defects by a rapid variety of beauties and brilliancies all his own, and affords more food to the understanding or imagination in a line or a couplet, than common writers in half a page. In short, if in point of versification, regularity, and correctness, his place is scarcely assignable among the poets; in the rarer qualities of variety and vigour of sentiment, and novelty and liveliness of imagery, it would not be easy to find any, in modern times at least, who has a right to rank above him.

The longest and most elaborate of Mr. Green's compositions, and that by which he is best known, is an epistolatory piece entitled The Spleen, of which the ingenious and elegant Mr. Melmoth has said, "that there are more original thoughts thrown together than ever he had read in the same compass of lines." The writer calls it a motley performance, and apologises for its want of method: a general subject may, however, be traced through it, which is, the art of attaining a tranquil state of mind, undisturbed by vexatious emotions and gloomy imaginations, and free from that mixture of listlessness and melancholy which has been denominated the Spleen. For this purpose, a sort of regimen for the soul is laid down, consisting chiefly in the practice of an easy good humoured philosophy, resembling that of Horace in his gay but sober mood, and comprising the best practical Epicurean system that has, perhaps, ever been sketched out. To speculate upon the various scenes of human life without deeply engaging in them; to indulge the excursions of fancy, but to restrain conduct by the reins of prudence; to give free entrance to all musive and agreeable objects, and carefully to exclude all of an opposite kind—are the principal heads of his didactic matter. But it appears to have been no small part of his design, to take the occasion his subject afforded, of bestowing strokes of satire *en passant*; at the same time that a fixed antipathy to those high claims upon our belief and acquiescence which cramp the exertions of reason and liberty, and a tendency to free speculation concerning theological topics, are sufficiently discernible throughout the piece. It is not the purpose of this Essay to give a moral or philosophical comment upon the author's system. Readers may take what they approve of it—and surely much *may* be approved—without embarrassing themselves about the rest. It is thus that Horace is read by all his rational admirers. Meantime, as all we know of Mr. Green authorises us to believe that he led an innocent and useful life we may conclude that *he*, at least, received no injury from his speculative tenets; deserving, on this account, a praise the opposite of that bestowed by Dr. Johnson on some of the subjects of his biographical sketches, who are commended for the stedfastness with which they held orthodox opinions, in the midst of worthless and licentious lives.

To proceed to a more particular survey of the poem:—The author, after an introduction in which, with great truth, he disclaims plagiarism, represents his purpose to be, that of replying to his friend's question, "what method he took to keep off attacks of the Spleen, and preserve serenity through the storms of the world." He sets out with a novel and very appropriate image of this noxious being, whom he represents as holding a magic lanthorn, by means of which he throws frightful figures upon the scene of life—an idea thought worthy of being copied in one of the designs with which the poem has been decorated.

The corporeal regimen prescribed against the Spleen consists of temperance and exercise. The early hours of the hunter, whose sport he recommends, gives occasion to a spirited picture of morning freeing herself from the defilements of the night, and triumphantly mounting the skies, which affords a specimen of his talents for inventive description; as the well known line concerning exercise,

> Fling but a stone, the giant dies,

does of his singular turn for ingenious allusion.

A satirical and entertaining enumeration follows, of objects proper to dispel Spleen by the ridicule they excite. This is succeeded by a description of the effects of theatrical representations, and music, in harmonising the soul;—which, however, cannot be much praised for originality. The description of a rainy day and its resources has more novelty; and the simile of the flying fish, with the allusions to the ark, and the manna of the Israelites, are striking specimens of the author's peculiar manner. It may be remarked respecting Green, (and I believe the remark would apply to many other writers educated among the Dissenters) that he abounds in references to scripture history; a habit derived from early familiarity with those writings, which has not unfrequently survived any particular veneration for their authority.

There is much feeling as well as fancy in the testimony given to the power possessed by the fair sex in banishing intrusions of Spleen. The contrast of black eyes and blue eyes is very striking; and the allusion to the miracle of St. Januarius's head is one of the most ingenious in the piece. The succeeding grave censure on modern female education may suggest useful reflections; yet few, it may be supposed, will now concur in the advice to confine girls for their security within "the safe high wall of ignorance."

What to avoid, is the next topic of the author's friendly admonition. At the head of the particulars enumerated he places, properly enough, that species of religion which inculcates gloomy and desponding ideas. With no less prudence he cautions against going to law; and his allegory of a forest may by lawyers themselves be admitted to be happily sustained. In warning against party strife, he takes occasion to characterise the two leading parties in church as they existed at his day. The contrast is drawn with truth and humour; but the force of his satirical wit is principally expended on the puritannical sect, the rigid and unamiable manners of which had very commonly the effect of disgusting most those who from birth and education took the nearest survey of them.

The nature and motives of the writer's present conformity are then explicitly stated. Not able to satisfy his doubts, he resorts to the laws for a decision, and goes "to Mecca with the caravan." As a consequence of such a principle, it is not extraordinary to find him renouncing all "reforming schemes," the end of which he seems to think absolutely unattainable, and therefore rather chooses to laugh at the follies of mankind, than run the hazard of making himself unhappy by "baffled zeal." In this conclusion he appears more consistent than he is in the subsequent exceptions made in favour of a zeal for civil liberty and freedom of the press. But the fact probably was, that his original habits of thinking, as well as the prevailing spirit of the times, preserved his attachments to the latter, while scepticism and the practice of occasional conformity had subdued his regard for religious truth. The passage, however, in which he maintains the cause of liberty and knowledge, is striking and spirited; and there is much pregnant truth in the concluding remark, that they who apply the gag, always rob first.

He proceeds in his enumeration of the things to be avoided, as parents of disappointment and chagrin. A very lively and appropriate image of Fortune, or rather Court-favour, is given in the similitude of a figure sportively throwing the reflected light of a mirror into the eyes of a gaping crowd. Like many other poets, Green is a declaimer against his own art; and indulges in some lively strictures upon those who mistake a fond desire after poetical fame, for real talents, as well as upon those who support their claims to reputation by plagiarism and artifice. The denomination of "the hop-grounds of the brain" given to verse, is peculiarly happy. His praise of Glover, another *citizen-poet* of distinguished merit, is liberal and affectionate.

Quitting admonition and satire, he comes at length to the direct means of procuring happiness in life; and having preluded with a rapturous address to contentment, he pours forth his sweetest strains, and the most pleasing effusions of his fancy, in a *wish*. Many poets have anticipated him in the indolent amusement of building castles in the air; but I know not if any one has been so successful in delineating a scene captivating to the lover of rural beauty and philosophic retirement. It is equally delightful as a piece of landscape painting, and as a moral portraiture; and the plan of life it lays down is a happy medium between that of the contemplative sage, and of the rational man of the world, who knows how to appreciate its comforts and enjoyments.

He next touches upon a higher topic, and with the seriousness of one friend addressing another, displays his sentiments concerning the prospects of a future existence. Whatever be thought of his mode of philosophising, it will not be denied that the whole passage is eminently distinguished by his characteristic vigour of expression and liveliness of fancy; and the spirited assertion of a free right to private judgment, uncontroled by those who boast themselves "lords of the manor of the soul," will meet with the concurrence of all whom such a writer could in any degree expect to please. The address to the Creator, suddenly checked by a consciousness of incapacity, and terminating in "mute praise and humble negatives," almost reaches the sublime.

The allegory representing human life as a voyage, with which the piece concludes, is an extremely hackneyed one. It may be traced through poets of various periods and nations; and, in particular, has been more than once employed by Horace, in passages in every one's memory. But perhaps it can no where be met with applied with so much exactness, and with such a variety of circumstances, as in the present instance. Reason sitting at the helm of the vessel, the Passions forming the crew, Philosophy putting forth the lights, Experience employing the glass and lead, the careening places of Bath and Tunbridge, and the dolphins sporting around, all together compose a wonderfully animated picture, clear in its conception, and happy in its resemblance.

Such is this singular poem on *the Spleen,* which few persons, it is imagined, will once read, without frequent re-perusals, every one of which will be repaid by new discoveries of uncommon and ingenious turns of thought. It possesses that undoubted mark of excellence, the faculty of impressing the memory with many of its strong sentiments and original images: and perhaps not more lines of Hudibras itself have been retained by its admirers, than of this poem.

The Epigram on Echard's and Burnet's Histories, and The Sparrow and Diamond, are sprightly trifles, on which it is unnecessary to bestow any remarks.

The Seeker is a curious piece of theological painting in the humorous style, the figures of which many will recognise to be drawn from the life.

The poem on Barclay's Apology for the Quakers is written perfectly in the manner of the serious and philosophical part of The Spleen; and is, indeed, an admirable piece, clear and correct in its language, and full of original thoughts. The description of the retired votary, receiving in silence and self annihilation the visitation of the spirit, is very striking and poetical, and renders solemn and impressive what has more commonly been represented in a ludicrous manner. The sentence,

For so divine and pure a guest
The emptiest rooms are furnish'd best,

is, indeed, capable of a sinister interpretation; but from the general air of the passage, he could not intend a sarcasm in this place; and the *emptiness* must mean no more than what proceeds from the temporary exclusion of external objects. Though there is an occasional sportiveness in his manner there seems no reason to doubt that he was in earnest in his approbation of the Quaker system, at least so far as to reckon it the nearest approach to pure christianity; and his allusion to the case of king Agrippa fairly displays the state of his mind. His apologies for not openly adopting the principles he approves, have all the appearance of sincerity, and are such as will touch the heart of every reader whose situation in life prevents him from acting up to his convictions. The honest confession,

> Like you I think, but cannot live

might become many characters of higher pretension than Mr. Green.

The most singular of our author's poems is entitled The Grotto, and was written on the erection of one of those edifices in Richmond Gardens by queen Caroline. It is not easy to say what sort of a poem such a subject should naturally produce; but we may be assured that from no other pen would it have produced any thing similar to the present. Yet, digressive as it is, we may discern a general design running throught it, that of considering the Grotto as

> A temple from vain glories free,
> Whose goddess is Philosophy;

an idea suggested as well by the character of the elevated personage who built it, as by the busts of the great men with which it was furnished. This edifice is the same that Pope invidiously calls the "hermitage" in which Dr. Clark was improperly placed; but no one free from party prejudice will think that he disgraces his company. The variety of thoughts which our author has found means to connect by his plan is very extraordinary, and many of them are truly admirable, though we may sometimes "wonder how the devil they came there." The character of the heathen deities, and the necessity imputed to them of "recruiting from earth's first commoners," are excellent strokes of satire. The comparison of the insect tribe with the human race is lively, but one does not see what insects have peculiarly to do with a grotto.

One of the best and most appropriate passages is the enumeration of things which should, as it were, be exorcised from this sacred spot. Many of them are characterised with peculiar felicity, as scandal, adulation, spleen, and prophecy. The mention of Melancholy among the group, serves to bring in the writer's Delia, whom we may suppose to be some favourite fair, too much addicted to gloom and low spirits. She is made the vehicle of some very sprightly and poetical description, though perfectly digressive from the topic of the piece. The comparison of the soul in a pensive fit to a sick linnet, and that of the tearful circle round the eye to a halo about the moon, are highly ingenious; and the enumeration of superstitious terrors is well conceived. Were we inclined to moralise on the occasion, it might be suggested, that this disposition to indulge in gloomy and terrific imaginations has been too much encouraged by some late works of fiction, which have delighted in painting with all the strength of pencil

——— in antique hall
The moonlight monsters on the wall;
And shadowy spectres darkly pass
Trailing their sables o'er the grass.

After this excursion, the poet returns to his exorcism, forbidding the entrance of the grotto to various other inauspicious beings, among whom the bigot is well characterised, as confined to look one way only

Through blinkers of authority.

He then invokes the proper nymph of the place, who seems to be the Urania mentioned in a former part of the piece, and allots her the fit companions, reason, religion, philosophy, and morals, —religion having first ceased "crusading against sense," and renewed her ancient alliance with philosophy. He represents nature as smiling at the nymph's presence, and zephyr "playing with her curls instead of leaves." In conclusion, he raises the fair sex to the upper seats of the shrine, and pursues a very fanciful parallel between the female form and mind, and some of the phenomena of nature. The poem terminates with a just compliment to the royal founder of the grotto, who, though a queen prised the friends of freedom, and canonised wise men though a woman.

It appears that this piece was printed at its first composition, but not published. Probably the author was sensible that it was likely neither to be relished nor understood by the common readers of *grotto poetry*. Indeed, it is not calculated to give out its beauties, or its meaning, to a single perusal; yet it will amply repay a closer examination. Why it was to pass under the name of "a Fisherman of Brentford" is not apparent. Certainly, it is extremely remote from the simple and rustic character which would suit a supposed author of that class.

The poems of Green, which have hitherto appeared chiefly or solely in miscellaneous collections, do not seem favourably placed in them, since the reader, in the midst of a variety of light and agreeable pieces, is apt to overlook those of more thought and solidity, especially if they have any thing forbidding in their first aspect. If their separate publication shall mark them out more pointedly to the lovers of English poetry, it is presumed that the writer's fame and the reader's pleasure will receive an equal accession.

A
CRITICAL ESSAY
ON
SOMERVILLE'S POEM
OF
THE CHASE.

THE true idea of a didactic poem being once established—that its real purpose is not to *teach*, but to *amuse* under the semblance of teaching—it will remain to be considered, what kinds of subjects afford the happiest themes for these compositions. The two great requisites appear to be, interest and variety. Without the former, the work will prove insipid; without the latter, tedious. The first point is secured by choosing a topic which is capable of rousing the passions, or, at least, of agitating the mind by lively emotions. The second is attained by frequent changes of scenery, and a due mixture of images derived from the senses and the understanding.

The subject of the poem before us will, it is presumed, be generally thought to possess both these advantages in no inconsiderable degree. As far as instinctive propensities can be attributed to man, it may be asserted that he has ever, in almost all the different states of society in which he has been placed, exhibited a native passion for the chase; and he may, perhaps, be denominated a *hunting animal,* with as much propriety as the dog or the panther. Like the former of these, he receives delight from the chase itself, independently of the acquisition; for it is found, that no degree of plenty obtained by the labours of others, or by exertions of a different kind, has been able to subdue that ardour by which many are impelled to incur hardships, fatigues, and even dangers, in pursuit of an object, which would be perfectly trifling, were it not for the gratification experienced in the very pursuit. What but the chase (or war, which is an image of it,) can urge the rich man to forego the pleasures of luxurious indolence, and submit to privations and bodily sufferings which for a time put him upon a level with the lowest of his train?—while the poor man is equally prone to encounter hazards of all kinds for the sake of a participation in the same animating delights. M. de Saussure, in his travels among the Alps, giving an account of the dangerous sport of chamois-hunting, relates the following circumstance. "I knew a young man, of an engaging figure and countenance, just married to a charming woman, who, in conversing upon this subject, said to me, My grandfather died in the chase, so did my father, and so persuaded am I that the same will be my destiny, that I call this sack which I take with me on my hunting expeditions, my winding-sheet, because I am certain I shall have no other. And yet, Sir, were you to offer to make my fortune on condition of my renouncing chamois-hunting, I would not comply." Within two years the poor man's prediction was verified. M. de Saussure, in accounting for this extraordinary passion, which could not be excited by any reasonable hopes of profit, justly attributes its power to the alternations of hope and fear, and the perpetual agitation of the mind from these strong emotions, which actuate the hunter as they do the gamester, the warrior, and the navigator.

With respect to the *variety* afforded by the chase as a subject for the poet, it is considerable, not only in direct description, but in digressive and incidental matter. The speculatist, who is inclined to take a wide range, may descant on various topics of philosophy and natural history connected with it; such as the separate powers of instinct and education in animals, the opposite laws of preservation and destruction in the economy of nature, the influence of climate and season, and the moral effects of the passion for the chase. If to these be added, historical digressions relative to the manners of different stages of society and periods of the world with respect to this object, intermixed, perhaps, with a portion of mythology, which might without force be introduced, it will appear, that a poem on hunting may possess compass and elevation enough to prove interesting even to those who are not practically attached to the sports of the field.

The poem of Mr. Somerville, however, is much less a philosophical than it is a descriptive one. The writer was a real, not a speculative, sportsman; and it was not till fixed to his elbow-chair by infirmity, that he thought of writing on the chase, instead of following it. Classically educated, but, as it appears, with a mind not remarkably opened by habits of investigation, or elevated by images of the fancy, he has produced a piece, the principal excellence of which consists in pictures drawn from the life, and animated by the warm genuine feelings of the painter. The language, the sentiments, the incidents, all display perfect acquaintance with the scenes described; and in hurrying from narration to narration, with little interposition of digressive and fanciful matter, he seems rather borne directly onward by his ardour for a favourite subject, than bounded by incapacity for excursive flights. By his manner of writing he has certainly attained that which should be the principal aim of every writer, whether in verse or prose—he has deeply interested his reader in his descriptions, and has placed every thing before the imagination in the strong light and vivid colours of reality. But the merit of the work is not confined to truth and spirit alone. Its plan and arrangement are formed with competent skill; variety and contrast are studied with success; and the attempt, at least, to break the uniformity of description by the intermixture of sentiment and reflection has not been neglected.

To proceed to a more particular examination of the poem:—After a dedicatory address to the Prince of Wales, in strains sufficiently adulatory, the writer gives a slight sketch of the origin of hunting in times of barbarism, and of its introduction in a more polished form into this island. The brevity with which he passes over these topics, certainly not unfertile of poetical ideas, proves his impatience to quit speculation and conjecture for the realities of description. A short but spirited passage on the praises of Britain, next introduces the proposed subject of the work, declared in an address to the youth of hereditary landed property; and the poet feelingly alludes to his own situation, prevented by years and infirmities from joining in the pleasures of the chase, but still recalling with delight his former triumphs, and pleased to point out to others the way to like renown.

The proper business of the book commences with a description of the dog-kennel, in which he soon exhibits his talent for accurate and lively painting, by representations of the pack issuing forth in the morning, oppressed by the fervor of noon, bathing in the cool stream, sporting with each other, and engaging in broils and combats. A particular and beautiful description of the hare hound or beagle succeeds, which is followed by a sketch of other kinds, adapted for different departments of the chase. This introduces a digression concerning the blood-hounds which were formerly kept on the Scottish border, and employed in detecting robbers. The picture of one of these at work in pursuing by the scent and at last detecting the felon, is highly animated. Hence the poet is naturally led to some philosophical discussion on the nature and cause of those effluvia which exercise the admirable sagacity of the canine species; and he concludes the book with showing the effects of atmospherical changes on the scenting power of dogs, and with some liberal sentiments concerning the advantages of a cultured mind in enabling a person to enjoy at home those days which are unfit for the diversions of the field.

The second book opens with a philosophical subject, which the poet, had he been so disposed, might not unsuitably have pursued to a greater extent. It is the power of instinct in modifying the actions and habits of the brute creation. He contents himself, however, with instancing its effects in two animals, the roebuck and the hare. In speaking of the latter, he slides into a fuller description of its manners and mode of life, preparatory to the first grand picture in his work, that of a hare-hunt. A pleasing view of autumn, and a spirited sketch of the dawn of day, are the immediate preludes. The impatience of the fiery courser, and the ecstasy of the pack let loose from their kennel, and ready to begin the chase, are finely painted. The ensuing description receives peculiar value from its circumstantial minuteness; which, displayed in natural and energetic language, intermixed with bursts of genuine feeling, gives wonderful force and truth to the whole scenery. If any one compares the finished picture of a chase by Somerville, with the draughts by Thomson, formed upon general ideas, and interspersed with sentiment and reflection, he will be sensible of the great difference between writing upon a topic merely as belonging to a general subject, and indulging in a favourite theme, which dwells on the mind in the vivid colours of memory and affection. It would be scarce possible even in prose to describe the hunting of the hare with more exactness than is here done; yet the language throughout is sufficiently elevated, and some of the passages are truly poetical. Such is that describing the *music of the chase*, and its fascinating effect upon all the hearers; well exemplifying the universality of that passion which urges men to partake of the hunter's pastime. Though there are touches in the representation which may call forth the emotions of pity in a feeling mind, yet the poet has judiciously refrained from enforcing them by moral sentiment and reflection, which would act in contradiction to his purpose. The effect of the opposite conduct of Thomson, in converting a joyous scene into a melancholy one, is obvious.

This humble though animated English hunting piece is succeeded by a contrast, representing the chase in its utmost pomp and magnificence, with respect both to the persons engaged in it, and the objects. It is an eastern picture, copied from the relations of travellers; and to which, therefore, the writer has brought nothing but his acquired skill in poetical painting, with the enthusiasm inspired by a favourite subject. It is truly a grand and noble piece, abounding in rich images and striking incidents, and wrought with great force and distinctness of colouring. Its character being, as it were, historical, there is little scope for strokes of the fancy; yet the effect of the martial music and shouts of the surrounding hunters upon the inclosed wild beasts, is conceived with true poetic imagination:

> ——— tygers fell
> Shrink at the noise; deep in his gloomy den
> The lion starts, and morsels yet unchewed
> Drop from his trembling jaws.

And the mutual rage of the encircled savages against each other, with their sudden tameness at the approach of their human foe, are striking ideas. If any objection lies against this splendid picture, it is, that being introduced thus early, it has a tendency to flatten and diminish the subsequent scenes. We shall see, however, that the poet has made the best use of his personal knowledge, to throw an interest, by force and clearness of circumstance, upon the home descriptions which he afterwards introduces.

The third book commences with the fox-chase, a subject which he seems to have laboured more *con amore* than any other. It is, indeed, the capital scene of action to the English sportsman; for though the stag is a much nobler object of pursuit, the chase of the fox more abounds with variety of incidents, and is a severer trial to the spirit of the hunters, and the perseverance of the dogs and horses. The brief account of the extirpation of the wolf, a kindred animal, from this island, forms an appropriate introduction. The casting off of the hounds, their working upon the scent, the unkennelling of the fox, his breaking away to the open country, and the full cry of the pack, are all highly animated pictures. In the pursuit, somewhat of the ludicrous is intermixed, together with some pathetic incidents, which last appear rather incongruous in a scene which is represented as inspiring "the madness of delight."

The notice taken of other modes of destroying this noxious animal, introduces a digression, in which are described the methods of taking the lion and the elephant in pitfalls, the curious manner of hunting the leopard by means of a mirror, and a wild-boar chase. All these pictures are copied from other authors, and of course are not enlivened with the spirit and circumstance of the British ones. Yet they afford an agreeable variety; and the draughts of the lion astonished by his fall into the pit, and of the elephant issuing majestically from his covert in the evening, are vigorously conceived.

The other capital picture of this book is that of a stag hunt in Windsor forest. Though vastly inferior in magnificence to that of the Indian hunting before described, it is, however, drawn in a dignified style, and made to partake of the polish and splendour of a court. Such being its character, it is no wonder that the ardour and animation congenial to the chase when partaken of by equals, is somewhat kept down; and that a kind of awe and respect for the exalted personages who compose the principal figures takes place of the sportman's rapture. This, too, is the only scene in which ladies are introduced as forming part of the group; whence gallantry has its share in the sentiments. But, much as we must admire the graceful form of the huntress, the *pensive* lover at her side makes rather an insipid figure. There is, however, considerable variety and interest in the events of the chase; and much diligence is employed to render the descriptions full and poetical. It concludes with a compliment to the sovereign on a supposed exertion of mercy in saving the life of the hunted animal; but the occasion is too trivial to justify the pomp of the sentiment.

The fourth book commences with a strain of philosophising, the drift of which it is not easy to discover. If the purpose were to establish the position, that unless a pack of hounds be recruited with a young brood, it will fall to decay, less effort and solemnity would have sufficed: it serves, however, as an introduction to various didactic topics belonging to his general subject; such as, the mode of rearing a young progeny, the choice of those which are best worth preserving, and the discipline by which they are to be trained, all which are treated in an interesting manner. The character of the babbling and unsteady hound is well drawn; and the method of curing the propensity to worrying sheep forms a natural and humourous picture. Touching on the diseases of dogs, the poet is led to a particular description of that dreadful malady, canine madness, in which the contrasted figures of melancholy and fury in the animal subject are sketched with great force. In describing the hydraphobia in the human subject, he seems not equally successful; and more knowledge of fact would have enabled him to render the draught more striking, without any mixture of fabulous circumstances. All this part of the fourth book would seem more naturally attached to the first, which treats of introductory matter; but the writer probably reserved it for this place, in order to break that continuity of hunting pieces, which might otherwise have proved tiresome. The last picture of this kind is well discriminated from the rest by a change of scene to another element. The chase of the otter, though an animal rather mean and inconsiderable, affords some very lively and amusing description. The view of a rivulet, and the various tribes of fish by which it is peopled, is truly beautiful; and there are some very picturesque touches in the watery landscape of the otter's retreat. It may be remarked, that though every former chase has contained full and rapturous descriptions of the "gallant chiding," the music of the hound and horn, the poet has been able in the present to repeat it with circumstances of novelty that give it striking effect

The poem concludes with an imitation of Virgil's well known praise of a rural life, in the second Georgic. The application, however, is less happy than in the original; for the poem of Somerville being professedly addressed to the heirs of great families, as those best qualified to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, there exists no real opposition between them and the possessors of opulence and splendour. It is true, he has, as much as possible, given it the turn of a contrast between town and country—

between the ambitious courtier and the sportsman; but since, in fact, the fox hunter in the country is often a politician in town, and hunting matches are usually associated with party, the distinction is rather apparent than real. Further, the sports of the hunter are noisy, tumultuous, attended with parade, and generally ending in conviviality; they ill accord therefore, with the calm, retired, reflective disposition of the lover of nature and votary of philosophy. If these tastes were united in Somerville, it is certain that they are rarely found to be so in his brother sportsmen. In reality, it is not among them that the admirers even of a poem on the chase are to be looked for. This work will briefly be read by the readers of English poetry in general; and its chief merit will be, to have afforded them a source of pleasing novelty;—to have placed in their view a set of lively pictures, which will strike with the appearance of truth even those who are not practical judges of their subjects.

From what has been above remarked, the poetical character of Somerville will be easily deduced. He is strictly and almost solely a *descriptive* poet; and his talent lies in delineating actual scenes with fidelity and spirit, adorning them with the beauties of diction, but leaving them to act upon the imagination by their own force, without aid from the creations of fancy. In classical allusion he is not deficient, but it is of the more common kind; and little occurs in his writings that indicates a mind inspired by that exalted enthusiasm which denotes the genius of superior rank. His versification is generally correct and well varied, and evidently flows from a nice and practised ear. His language is well suited to his subjects, rising and sinking with them, and free from that stiffness and affectation so commonly attendant on blank verse. It more resembles that of Armstrong, than of Thomson or Akenside. Some of his other poems show him to have had a strong perception of the ludicrous; and in this, too, traits of humour are discernible. On the whole, Somerville occupies a respectable place among our native poets; and his *Chase* is probably the best performance upon that topic which any country has produced.

AN ESSAY

ON

THE POETRY OF GOLDSMITH.

AMONG those false opinions which, having once obtained currency, have been adopted without examination, may be reckoned the prevalent notion, that notwithstanding the improvement of this country in many species of literary composition, its poetical character has been on the decline ever since the supposed Augustan age of the beginning of the 18th century. No one poet, it is true, has fully succeeded to the laurel of Dryden or Pope; but if without prejudice we compare the minor poets of the present age (*minor*, I mean, with respect to the *quantity*, not the *quality*, of their productions) with those of any former period, we shall, I am convinced, find them greatly superior not only in taste and correctness, but in every other point of poetical excellence. The works of many late and present writers might be confidently appealed to in proof of this assertion; but it will suffice to instance the author who is the subject of the present Essay; and I cannot for a moment hesitate to place the name of Goldsmith, as a poet, above that of Addison, Parnel, Tickel, Congreve, Landsdown, or any of those who fill the greater part of the voluminous collection of the *English Poets*. Of these, the main body has obtained a prescriptive right to the honour of classical writers, while their works, ranged on the shelves as necessary appendages to a modern library, are rarely taken down, and contribute very little to the stock of literary amusement. Whereas the pieces of Goldsmith are our familiar companions; and supply passages for recollection, when our minds are either composed to moral reflection, or warmed by strong emotions and elevated conceptions. There is, I acknowledge, much of habit and accident in the attachments we form to particular writers; yet I have little doubt, that if the lovers of English poetry were confined to a small selection of authors, Goldsmith would find a place in the favourite list of a great majority. And it is, I think, with much justice that a great modern critic has ever regarded this concurrence of public favour, as one of the least equivocal tests of uncommon merit. Some kinds of excellence, it is true, will more readily be recognised than others; and this will not always be in proportion to the degree of mental power employed in the respective productions; but he who obtains general and lasting applause in any work of art, must have happily executed a design judiciously formed. This remark is of fundamental consequence in estimating the poetry of Goldsmith; because it will enable us to hold the balance steady, when it might be disposed to incline to the superior claims of a style of loftier pretension, and more brilliant reputation.

Compared with many poets of deserved eminence, Goldsmith will appear characterised by his *simplicity.* In his language will be found few of those figures which are supposed *of themselves* to constitute poetry;—no violent transpositions; no uncommon meanings and constructions; no epithets drawn from abstract and remote ideas; no coinage of new words by the ready mode of turning nouns into verbs; no bold prosopopœia, or audacious metaphor:—it scarcely contains an expression which might not be used in eloquent and descriptive prose. It is replete with imagery; but that imagery is drawn from obvious sources, and rather enforces the simple idea, than dazzles by new and unexpected ones. It rejects not common words and phrases; and, like the language of Dryden and Otway, is thereby rendered the more forcible and pathetic. It is eminently nervous and concise; and hence affords numerous passages which dwell on the memory. With respect to his matter, it is taken from human life, and the objects of nature. It does not body forth things unknown, and create new beings. Its humbler purpose is to represent manners and characters as they really exist; to impress strongly on the heart moral and political sentiments; and to fill the imagination with a variety of pleasing or affecting objects selected from the stores of nature. If this be not the highest department of poetry, it has the advantage of being the most universally agreeable. To receive delight from the sublime fictions of Milton, the allegories of Spencer, the learning of Gray, and the fancy of Collins, the mind must have been prepared by a course of particular study; and perhaps, at a certain period of life, when the judgment exercises a severer scrutiny over the sallies of the imagination, the relish for artificial beauties will always abate, if not entirely desert us. But at every age, and with every degree of culture, correct and well chosen representations of nature must please. We admire them when young; we recur to them when old; and they charm us till nothing longer can charm. Further, in forming a scale of excellence for artists, we are not only to consider who works upon the noblest design, but who fills his design best. It is, in reality, but a poor excuse for a slovenly performer to say *magnis tamen excidit ausis*; and the addition of one master-piece of any kind to the stock of art, is a greater benefit, than that of a thousand abortive and mis-shapen wonders.

If Goldsmith then be referred to the class of *descriptive poets*, including the description of moral as well as of physical nature, it will next be important to inquire by what means he has attained the rank of a master in his class. Let us then observe how he has selected, combined, and contrasted his objects, with what truth and strength of colouring he has expressed them, and to what end and purpose.

As poetry and eloquence do not describe by an exact enumeration of every circumstance, it is necessary to *select* certain particulars which may excite a sufficiently distinct image of the thing to be represented. In this *selection*, the great art is to give *characteristic marks*, whereby the object may at once be recognised, without being obscured in a mass of common properties, which belong equally to many others. Hence the great superiority of *particular* images to *general* ones in description: the former identify, while the latter disguise. Thus all the hackneyed representations of the country, in the works of ordinary versifiers, in which groves, and rills, and flowery meads are introduced just as the rhyme and measure require, present nothing to the fancy but an indistinct daub of colouring, in which all the diversity of nature is lost and confounded. To catch the discriminating features, and present them bold and prominent, by few, but decisive strokes, is the talent of a master; and it will not be easy to produce a superior to Goldsmith in this respect. The mind is never in doubt as to the meaning of his figures, nor does it languish over the survey of trivial and unappropriated circumstances. All is alive—all is filled—yet all is clear

The proper *combination* of objects refers to the impression they are calculated to make on the mind; and requires that they should harmonise, and reciprocally enforce and sustain each other's effect. They should unite in giving one leading tone to the imagination; and without a sameness of form, they should blend in an uniformity of hue. This, too, has very successfully been attended to by Goldsmith, who has not only sketched his single figures with truth and spirit, but has combined them into the most harmonious and impressive groups. Nor has any descriptive poet better understood the great force of *contrast*, in setting off his scenes, and preventing any approach to wearisomeness by repetition of kindred objects. And with great skill, he has contrived that both parts of his contrast should conspire in producing one intended moral effect. Of all these excellencies, examples will be pointed out as we take a cursory view of the particular pieces.

In addition to the circumstances already noted, the *force* and *clearness* of representation depend also on the diction. It has already been observed that Goldsmith's language is remarkable for its general simplicity, and the direct and proper use of words. It has ornaments, but these are not far-fetched. The epithets employed are usually qualities strictly belonging to the subject, and the true colouring of the simple figure. They are frequently contrived to express a necessary circumstance in the description, and thus avoid the usual imputation of being expletive. Of this kind are, "the *rattling* terrors of the *vengeful* snake;" "*indurated* heart;" "shed *intolerable* day;" "*matted* woods;" "*ventrous* ploughshare;" "*equinoctial* fervours." The examples are not few of that indisputable mark of true poetic language, where a single word conveys an image; as in these instances: "resignation gently *slopes* the way;" "*scoops out* an empire;" "the vessel idly waiting *flaps* with every gale;" "to *winnow* fragrance;" "murmurs *fluctuate* in the gale." All metaphor, indeed, does this in some degree; but where the accessory idea is either indistinct or incongruous, as frequently happens when it is introduced as an artifice to force language up to poetry, the effect is only a gaudy obscurity.

The *end* and *purpose* to which description is directed is what distinguishes a well planned piece from a loose effusion; for though a vivid representation of striking objects will ever afford some pleasure, yet if aim and design be wanting, to give it a basis, and stamp it with the dignity of meaning, it will in a long performance prove flat and tiresome. But this is a want which cannot be charged on Goldsmith; for both the *Traveller* and the *Deserted Village* have a great moral in view, to which the whole of the description is made to tend. I do not now inquire into the legitimacy of the conclusions he has drawn from his premises; it is enough to justify his plans, that such a purpose is included in them.

The *versification* of Goldsmith is formed on the general model that has been adopted since the refinement of English poetry, and especially since the time of Pope. To manage rhyme couplets so as to produce a pleasing effect on the ear, has since that period been so common an attainment, that it merits no particular admiration. Goldsmith may, I think, be said to have come up to the usual standard of proficiency in this respect, without having much surpassed it. A musical ear, and a familiarity with the best examples, have enabled him, without much apparent study, almost always to avoid defect, and very often to produce excellence. It is no censure of this poet to say that his versification presses less on the attention than his matter. In fact, he has none of those peculiarities of versifying, whether improvements or not, that some who aim at distinction in this point have adopted. He generally suspends or closes the sense at the end of the line or of the couplet; and therefore does not often give examples of that greater compass and variety of melody which is obtained by longer clauses, or by breaking the coincidences of the cadence of sound and meaning. He also studiously rejects triplets and alexandrines. But allowing for the want of these sources of variety, he has sufficiently avoided monotony; and in the usual flow of his measure, he has gratified the ear with as much change, as judiciously shifting the line-pauses can produce.

Having made these general observations on the nature of Goldsmith's poetry, I proceed to a survey of his principal pieces.

The *Traveller*, or *Prospect of Society*, was first sketched out by the author during a tour in Europe, great part of which he perfomed on foot, and in circumstances which afforded him the fullest means of becoming acquainted with the most numerous class in society, peculiarly termed *the people.* The date of the first edition is 1765. It begins in the gloomy mood natural to genius in distress, when wandering alone

> Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow.

After an affectionate and regretful glance to the peaceful seat of fraternal kindness, and some expressions of self-pity, the poet sits down amid Alpine solitudes to spend a pensive hour in meditating on the state of mankind. He finds that the natives of every land regard their own with preference; whence he is led to this proposition,—that if we impartially compare the advantages belonging to different countries, we shall conclude that an equal portion of good is dealt to all the human race. He further supposes, that every nation, having in view one peculiar species of happiness, models life to that alone; whence this favourite kind, pushed to an extreme, becomes a source of peculiar evils. To exemplify this by instances, is the business of the subsequent descriptive part of the piece.

Italy is the first country that comes under review. Its general landscape is painted by a few characteristic strokes, and the felicity of its climate is displayed in appropriate imagery. The revival of arts and commerce in Italy, and their subsequent decline, are next touched upon; and hence is derived the present disposition of the people—easily pleased with splendid trifles, the wrecks of their former grandeur; and sunk into an enfeebled moral and intellectual character, reducing them to the level of children.

From these he turns with a sort of disdain, to view a nobler race, hardened by a rigorous climate, and by the necessity of unabating toil. These are the *Swiss*, who find, in the equality of their condition, and their ignorance of other modes of life, a source of content which remedies the natural evils of their lot. There cannot be a more delightful picture than the poet has drawn of the Swiss peasant, going forth to his morning's labour, and returning at night to the bosom of domestic happiness. It sufficiently accounts for that *patriot passion* for which they have ever been so celebrated, and which is here described in lines that reach the heart, and is illustrated by a beautiful simile. But this state of life has also its disadvantages. The sources of enjoyment being few, a vacant listlessness is apt to creep upon the breast; and if nature urges to throw this off by occasional bursts of pleasure, no stimulus can reach the purpose but gross sensual debauch. Their morals, too, like their enjoyments, are of a coarse texture. Some sterner virtues hold high dominion in their breasts, but all the gentler and more refined qualities of the heart, which soften and sweeten life, are exiled to milder climates.

To the more genial climate of *France* the Traveller next repairs, and in a very pleasing rural picture he introduces himself in the capacity of musician to a village party of dancers beside the murmuring Loire. The leading feature of this nation he represents as being the love of praise; which passion, while it inspires sentiments of honour, and a desire of pleasing, also affords a free course to folly, and nourishes vanity and ostentation. The soul, accustomed to depend for its happiness on foreign applause, shifts its principles with the change of fashion, and is a stranger to the value of self-approbation.

The strong contrast to this national character is sought in *Holland;* a most graphical description of the scenery presented by that singular country, introduces the moral portrait of the people. From the necessity of unceasing labour, induced by their peculiar circumstances, a habit of industry has been formed, of which the natural consequence is a love of gain. The possession of exuberant wealth has given rise to the arts and conveniences of life; but at the same time has introduced a crafty, cold and mercenary temper, which sets every thing, even liberty itself, at a price. How different, exclaims the poet, from their Belgian ancestors! how different from the present race of Britain!

To Britain, then, he turns, and begins with a slight sketch of the country, in which, he says, the mildest charms of creation are combined,

> Extremes are only in the master's mind.

He then draws a very striking picture of a stern, thoughtful, independent freeman, a creature of reason, unfashioned by the common forms of life, and loose from all its ties;—and this he gives as the representative of the English character. A society formed by such unyielding self-dependent beings, will naturally be a scene of violent political contests, and ever in a ferment with party. And a still worse fate awaits it; for the ties of nature, duty, and love failing, the fictitious bonds of wealth and law must be employed to hold together such a reluctant association; whence the time may come, that valour, learning, and patriotism may all lie levelled in one sink of avarice. These are the ills of freedom; but the poet, who would only repress to secure, goes on to deliver his ideas of the cause of such mischiefs, which he seems to place in the usurpations of aristocratical upon regal authority; and with great energy he expresses his indignation at the oppressions the poor suffer from their petty tyrants. This leads him to a kind of anticipation of the subject of his *Deserted Village*, where, laying aside the politician, and resuming the poet, he describes, by a few highly pathetic touches, the depopulated fields, the ruined village, and the poor forlorn inhabitants driven from their beloved home, and exposed to all the perils of the trans-atlantic wilderness. It is by no means my intention to enter into a discussion of Goldsmith's political opinions, which bear evident marks of confused notions and a heated imagination. I shall confine myself to a remark upon the English national character, which will apply to him in common with various other writers, native and foreign.

This country has long been in the possession of more unrestrained freedom of thinking and acting than any other perhaps that ever existed; a consequence of which has been, that all those peculiarities of character, which in other nations remain concealed in the general mass, have here stood forth prominent and conspicuous; and these being from their nature calculated to draw attention, have by superficial observers been mistaken for the general character of the people. This has been particularly the case with political distinction. From the publicity of all proceedings in the legislative part of our constitution, and the independence with which many act, all party differences are strongly marked, and public men take their side with openness and confidence. Public topics, too, are discussed by all ranks; and whatever seeds there are in any part of the society of spirit and activity, have full opportunity of germinating. But to imagine that these busy and high spirited characters compose a majority of the community, or perhaps a much greater proportion than in other countries, is a delusion. This nation, as a body, is, like all others, characterised by circumstances in its situation; and a rich commercial people, long trained to society, inhabiting a climate where many things are necessary to the comfort of life, and under a government abounding with splendid distinctions, cannot possibly be a knot of philosophers and patriots.

To return from this digression. Though it is probable that few of Goldsmith's readers will be convinced, even from the instances he has himself produced, that the happiness of mankind is every where equal; yet all will feel the force of the truly philosophical sentiment which concludes the piece,—that man's chief bliss is ever seated in his mind; and that a small part of real felicity consists in what human governments can either bestow or withhold.

The *Deserted Village*, first printed in 1769, is the companion-piece of the *Traveller*, formed, like it, upon a plan which unites description with sentiment, and employs both in inculcating a political moral. It is a view of the prosperous and ruined state of a country village, with reflections on the causes of both. Such it may be defined in prose; but the disposition, management and colouring of the piece, are all calculated for poetical effect. It begins with a delightful picture of Auburn when inhabited by a happy people. The view of the village itself, and the rural occupations and pastimes of its simple natives, is in the best style of painting by a selection of characteristic circumstances. It is immediately contrasted by a similar bold sketch of its ruined and desolated condition. Then succeeds an imaginary state of England, in a kind of golden age of equality; with its contrast likewise. The apostrophe that follows, the personal complaint of the poet, and the portrait of a sage in retirement, are sweetly sentimental touches, that break the continuity of description.

He returns to Auburn, and having premised another masterly sketch of its two states, in which the images are chiefly drawn from sounds, he proceeds to what may be called the interior history of the village. In his first figure he has tried his strength with Dryden. The *parish-priest* of that great poet, improved from Chaucer, is a portrait full of beauty, but drawn in a loose unequal manner, with the flowing vein of digressive thought and imagery that stamps his style. The subject of the draught, too, is considerably different from that of Goldsmith, having more of the ascetic and mortified cast, in conformity to the saintly model of the Roman Catholic priesthood. The pastor of Auburn is more *human*, but is not on that account a less venerable and interesting figure; though I know not whether all will be pleased with his familiarity with vicious characters, which goes beyond the purpose of mere reformation. The description of him in his professional character is truly admirable; and the similes of the bird instructing his young to fly, and the tall cliff rising above the storm, have been universally applauded. The first, I believe, is original;—the second is not so, though it has probably never been so well drawn and applied. The subsequent sketches of the village school-master and the alehouse are close imitations of nature in low life, like the pictures of Teniers and Hogarth. Yet even these humorous scenes slide imperceptibly into sentiment and pathos; and the comparison of the simple pleasures of the poor, with the splendid festivities of the opulent, rises to the highest style of moral poetry. Who has not felt the force of that reflection,

The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy?

The writer then falls into a strain of reasoning against luxury and superfluous wealth, in which the sober inquirer will find much serious truth, though mixed with poetical exaggeration. The description of the contrasted scenes of magnificence and misery in a great metropolis, closed by the pathetic figure of the forlorn ruined female, is not to be surpassed.

Were not the subjects of Goldsmith's description so skilfully varied, the uniformity of manner, consisting in an enumeration of single, circumstances, generally depicted in single lines, might tire; but where is the reader who can avoid being hurried along by the swift current of imagery, when to such a passage as the last, succeeds a landscape fraught with all the sublime terrors of the torrid zone;—and then, an exquisitely tender history-piece of the departure of the villagers; concluded with a groupe (slightly touched, indeed) of allegorical personages? A noble address to the genius of poetry, in which is compressed the moral of the whole, gives a dignified finishing to the work.

If we compare these two principal poems of Goldsmith, we may say, that the *Traveller* is formed upon a more regular plan, has a higher purpose in view, more abounds in thought, and in the expression of moral and philosophical ideas; the *Deserted Village* has more imagery, more variety, more pathos, more of the peculiar character of poetry. In the first, the moral and natural descriptions are more general and elevated; in the second, they are more particular and interesting. Both are truly original productions; but the *Deserted Village* has less peculiarity, and indeed has given rise to imitations which may stand in some parallel with it; while the *Traveller* remains an *unique.*

With regard to Goldsmith's other poems, a few remarks will suffice. The *Hermit,* printed in the same year with the *Traveller,* has been a very popular piece, as might be expected of a tender tale prettily told. It is called a *ballad,* but I think with no correct application of that term, which properly means a story related in language either naturally or affectedly rude and simple. It has been a sort of fashion to admire these productions; yet in the really ancient ballads, for one stroke of beauty, there are pages of insipidity and vulgarity; and the imitations have been pleasing in proportion as they approached more finished compositions. In Goldsmith's *Hermit,* the language is always polished, and often ornamented. The best things in it are some neat turns of moral and pathetic sentiment, given with a simple conciseness that fits them for being retained in the memory. As to the story, it has little fancy or contrivance to recommend it.

We have already seen that Goldsmith possessed humour; and, exclusively of his comedies, pieces professedly humourous form a part of his poetical remains. His imitations of Swift are happy, but they *are* imitations. His tale of the *Double Transformation* may vie with those of Prior. His own natural vein of easy humour flows freely in his *Haunch of Venison* and *Retaliation;* the first, an admirable specimen of a very ludicrous story made out of a common incident by the help of conversation and character; the other, an original thought, in which his talent at drawing portraits, with a mixture of the serious and the comic, is most happily displayed.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

APHORISMS ON MIND AND MANNERS.

HE who, after a loss, immediately, without staying to lament it, sets about repairing it, has that within himself which can control fortune.

The youth who can sneer at exalted virtue, needs not wait for age and experience to commence a consummate knave.

He whose first emotion on the view of an excellent production, is to undervalue it, will never have one of his own to show.

The conscious merit of true ability, never goes further than "I too am a painter."

The hardest trial of the heart is, whether it can bear a rival's failure without triumph.

Him whom descrying at a distance, you turn out of the way to avoid, you may call your friend or benefactor, but you do not love.

He, who begins life with "*Nil admirari,*" will end it "*Epicuri de grege porcus.*"

The man who, improving in skill or knowledge, improves in modesty, has an undeniable claim to greatness of mind.

Bravely to contend for a good cause is noble—silently to suffer for it, is heroical.

Would a man of rank estimate his real dignity, let him conceive himself in a state in which all rank is abolished.

All professions, it is said, have their mysteries—these are precisely the points in which consists their weakness or knavery.

To choose a good book, look into an inquisitor's prohibited list—to choose a good cause, see which interested men dislike.

There are three sights most detestable:—a proud priest giving his blessing,—a knavish hypocrite saying his prayers,—and a false patriot making an harangue.

Who says *hypocritical*, says all that is despicable in morals:—who says *affected*, says all that is odious in manners.

Columbus steering steadily westward for a land seen only by the eye of his reason, was one of the greatest of human characters:—a projector obstinately running himself in pursuit of a visionary scheme, may be one of the foolishest, but certainly not of the lowest.

Thoroughly to try a man's patience, he must have the labour of years consumed before his eyes in a moment:—thoroughly to prove it, he must instantly begin to renew his labour.

The woman of sensibility, who preserves serenity and good temper, amid the insults of a faithless and brutal husband, wants nothing of an angel but immortality.

The woman who rises above sickness and poverty combined, may look down upon the noisy heroism of kings and generals.

Better to be moved by false glory, than not moved at all.

Nothing is such an obstacle to the production of *excellence*, as the power of producing what is *pretty good* with ease and rapidity.

As reasonably expect oaks from a mushroom bed, as great and durable products from small and hasty efforts.

Every work of great genius, and every work of great care and industry, will have its value; but mediocrity, with negligence, gives products of no value at all.

WHAT MAN IS MADE FOR.

SOON after the marriage of the dauphin and dauphiness of France, (the late unfortunate Louis XVI. and Antoinette,) when all the conversation ran upon the splendid fire-works exhibited at their nuptials, a friend of mine happening to be at Paris, was much amused with a circumstance to which he was witness, in a room full of company. A boy, about seven years old, possessed of rather more than an ordinary degree of that forward vivacity which is so characteristic of the youthful part of the French nation, was haranguing, in the midst of the circle, with great volubility and emphasis, on the subject of fire works, and giving a description of what he conceived would make a perfect spectacle of that kind. But while he was painting with all his eloquence, the immense volumes of flame, and prodigious explosions, that filled his imagination, a by-stander ventured to observe, that all the people employed about them would be in danger of being blown to pieces. "*Ah,* (says the boy, with a *nonchalance* worthy of the *privileged orders*)—*Ah, ils sont faits pour cela,*"—" It is what they are made for."

This expression has often come into my mind, on reflecting upon the destiny of the great bulk of mankind, in all past, and in the present periods; I have wished, if possible, to satisfy myself, what, in reality, the human race was made for? and I confess, willing as I am to entertain better hopes, I cannot discover, from any principles of philosophising, so sure a ground for reasoning concerning the future condition of mankind, as the uniform experience of some thousands of past years. If I breed up a horse for the course, or a dog for the chase, or a game cock for the pit, it is because a long course of experiments has convinced me that such is the *nature* of those animals, and that I am pretty sure of finding in the progeny those qualities and dispositions which I remarked in the parents. May not then a king of Prussia, with equal reason, train a number of two legged unfeathered creatures, called *men,* to pillage, enslave, and murder other men, at the word of command, in the confidence, that as the experiment succeeded with Sesostris, Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, Gengiskan, Tamerlane, Charles, Louis, and a great many more *men-masters,* it will so succeed with him;—in other words, as the French boy said, that "*ils sont faits pour cela?*"

Further—Man is a creature of strong appetites and passions. These are evolved in him earlier than the principles of reason and understanding, and, in much the greater part of the species, they continue to take the lead during life. Sensual pleasures have attractions for all men; and it is only that class who, by means of the bodily labour of the majority, are able to live in comparative ease and leisure, that can acquire a relish for intellectual enjoyments. Now, the more numerous mankind become, the more sedulous must be their exertions to procure the *necessaries* of life, which must ever be the first concern. The more refinement and luxury prevail among the higher classes, the greater proportion of the lower must devote the whole of their time to labour, in a variety of new modes. Even the improvements in arts and sciences require the additional manual toil of inferior artists; and the ingenuity of one head sets at work a thousand pair of hands. What is implied by the sublime discoveries of a Herschel?—the existence of the collier, miner, forgeman, smith, brazier, glassmaker and grinder, carpenter, &c. &c. all of whom must be hard-working men, living in garrets or cellars, drinking porter and drams, when they can get them, and placing their *summum bonum* in a hot supper and a warm bed. That is *what they are made for.* And when the government under which they live and of which they must always be *subjects*, not *members*, chooses to quarrel with a neighbouring state, about the right of fishing or trading on the other side of the globe, or some equally worthy matter of debate, these very men must be compelled or debauched to clap an uniform on their backs, and a musket on their shoulders, and learn to kill and be killed, at the word of command—for this, too, is *what they are made for.*

An acquaintance of mine, who is fond of the Linnæan mode of characterising objects of natural history, has amused himself with drawing up the following definition of man:—

Simia *Homo:* sine caude: pedibus posticis ambulans: gregarium, omnivorum, inquietum, mendax, furax, rapax, salax, pugnax, artium variarum capax, animalium reliquorum hostis, sui ipsius inimicus acerrimus.

ON THE TOUCH FOR THE KING'S EVIL.

I CONFESS myself to be one of those, whom a pretty long experience of mankind has not tended to render highly enamoured of the species, or very confident of its progress towards melioration. I think I see the same radical defects of character prevailing in all periods, and through all external circumstances and though diversely modified, yet ever operating to produce the principal part of the evils under which the human race continually labours. In particular, the disposition *to deceive and be* *deceived*, appears to me always in full operation in all societies whether savage or civilized; and, since much of the weakness and unhappiness, if not of the vice, of men, proceeds from this source, I conceive that to detect and counteract it, will ever be one of the best services that a thinking mind can render its fellow creatures. An instance having occurred to me in my reading, which I think remarkably well calculated to display the joint action of fraud and credulity, with respect to a very common object of superstition,—that of the miraculous cure of disease,—I propose to lay it before the public, together with the remarks which it has suggested to me.

Those who have endeavoured to support the reality of the efficacy of the *royal touch*, in the cure of the scrophula, or king's evil, have laid particular stress on the testimony of Wiseman. This person was serjeant surgeon to Charles II.; of high reputation in his profession, and the author of a work in surgery, long reckoned a standard performance, and which shows him to have been a fair and modest man, as well as an excellent practitioner. It contains an express treatise on the king's evil, in which he speaks of the *touch*, in the following strong terms: "I, myself, have been a frequent eye witness of many hundreds of cures performed by his majesty's touch alone, without any assistance of chirurgery; and those, many of them, such as had tired out the endeavours of able chirurgeons before they came thither. It were endless to recite what I myself have seen, and what I have received acknowledgments of, by letter, not only from the several parts of this nation, but also from Ireland, Scotland, Jersey, and Germany." Is it possible for a testimony to be more direct and positive or to proceed from a more competent witness? Yet, probably, there is scarcely at present a man in England who is not convinced that the whole pretension was a falsehood (for *that* imposture is now worn out.) How then are we to account for Wiseman's conduct? Was he himself deceived, or did he knowingly lend his aid to carry on a cheat? Both suppositions have their difficulties, yet both are in some degree probable. His warm attachment to the royal family, and early prejudices, might inspire him with a faith beyond the control of his judgment. On the other hand, certain passages in this treatise show a necessary consciousness of collusion, and are, indeed, the true confutation of that above quoted, which otherwise might stagger one who judged from direct evidence alone.

It was his office, as serjeant surgeon, to select such afflicted objects, as were proper to be presented for the royal touch. In the history of the disease, when describing its various states and appearances, he says, "Those which we present to his majesty, are chiefly such as have this sort of tumor about the musculus mastoideus, or neck, with whatever circumstances they are accompanied; nor are we difficult in admitting the thick chapped upper lips, and eyes afflicted with a lippitudo: *in other cases we give our judgment more warily*." Here is a selection of the slightest cases, which most readily undergo a spontaneous alteration, and a manifest doubt expressed concerning the success in more inveterate ones. A little below, observing that the strumæ will often suppurate, or be resolved unexpectedly from accidental ferments, he says, "In case of the king's touch, the resolution doth often happen, where our endeavours have signified nothing; yea, the very gummata, insomuch that I am cautious of predicting concerning them (though they appear never so bad) till fourteen days be over." From this passage we may infer, that the touch was by no means infallible, and that the pretence of its succeeding was not given up, till a fortnight had elapsed without any change for the better.

Indeed, it appears very evident, that the worst kind of cases were seldom or never offered to the touch; for in no disease does Wiseman adduce more examples from his own practice of difficult and tedious chirurgical treatment, nor do we find, that in one of these he called in the aid of the royal hand. It was proposed in a single instance; but under circumstances that furnish a stronger proof of imposture, than any thing yet mentioned. A young gentlewoman had an obstinate scrophulous tumor in the right side of the neck, under the jaw; Wiseman applied a large caustic to it, brought it to suppuration, treated it with escharotics, and cured it. "About a year after," says he, "I saw her again in town, and felt a small gland of the bigness of a lupin, lying lower on that side of the neck. I would have persuaded her to admit of a resolvent emplaster, and *to be touched;* but she did not, as she said believe it to be the king's evil." Here, after allowing his patient to undergo a course of very severe surgery, he is willing to trust the relics of the disease to the *royal touch* assisted by a *resolving plaster;* but the complaint was now too trifling to engage her attention. Surely, the greatest opponent of the *touch* could not place it in a more contemptible light.

Thus do the boldest assertions of wonderful and supernatural occurrences, shrink into nothing before a patient and critical examination; and thus inconsistent with itself is an extravagant pretension ever found to be. It was enough to refute the impudent claims of the alchemists, that these pretended gold makers were beggars in rags; as it is a very convincing proof, that the royal touch cannot cure the king's evil, when it becomes the evil of kings.

In order fully to prove the reality of an extraordinary cure, three points of evidence are necessary:—that the disease existed, that it was cured, and that the alleged means were what alone performed the cure. But how seldom have these concurred in an authentic form, to establish a wonderful tale of this kind! Yet men are still the dupes of their own credulity; and who can forsee an end to this delusion?

LITERARY PROPHECIES FOR 1797.

I DISCERN in embryo three new tragedies, five comedies, and six musical entertainments for the London Theatres. The tragedies will be splendid, stately, and abundantly loyal—they will be praised in the papers till nobody goes to see them. The comedies will be partly sentiment, partly farce; and two of them, at least, by the efforts of the actors for whom they are written, will be preserved from oblivion till the year 1798. The musical pieces will certainly expire with the almanacs.

A new imposition will be practised on the black-letter gentlemen with some success; but the hero, this year, will not be Shakspeare, nor will a six shilling book be written, after its detection, to prove that it ought to have been believed.

The controversy about the talents of women, will give birth to two bulky volumes, from a female pen; which will, at least, prove that lightness and vivacity are not, as has been supposed, characteristic of the writers of that sex.

The Oxford University press will this year be chiefly employed in printing catechisms for the use of French emigrants and their converts; yet some progress will be made in re-editing a German edition of a forgotten classic.—N. B. Dr. Bradley's astronomical papers will *not* appear this year.

The alliance of church and state, and the consanguinity of *all* religions, will be ably supported by an eminent divine, in full prospect of a seat on the episcopal bench.

The political world will be thrown into a strange ferment towards the end of autumn, by an extraordinary publication of an extraordinary character, containing a renunciation of all former principles. I am sorry that the delicate nature of the subject obliges me, in this instance, to adopt somewhat of the ambiguous language of other prophets.

The elegant press of Bulmer will, this year, send forth a Collection of *the Puerile Poetry of England;* wherein the popular compositions of "Hey my kitten, my kitten;" "Jack and Gill went up the hill;" "There were three crows they sat on a stone;" and a variety of the like kind, will be carefully edited and illustrated with historical and critical notes, by a learned member of the Society of Antiquaries. Vignettes, head and tail pieces, and designs, by a lady of quality, as usual.

Two Pindaric Odes, by a hackney coachman; a Collection of Sentimental Sonnets, by a washer-woman; and an Epic Poem, in twenty books, by a printer's devil, composed in types, instead of being committed to paper, will agreeably entertain the lovers of poetry.

An infallible method of cure for the yellow fever, which wants only a trial beyond the Atlantic to demonstrate its efficacy, will be communicated to the public by a young graduate from Scotland.

A new project of nutrition, by inhaling the gases of bakers', cheesemongers' and cooks' shops, will administer *food* to the pneumatic speculators.

I see this moment on the road from Edinburgh, two bulkly MSS. one, an absolutely new Theory of the Human Understanding; the other, a Complete History of the Proceedings of one of the Provincial Synods ever since the Reformation: but whether any bookseller will be found to undertake their publication, my art does not positively inform me.

A novel, by a lady, will make some noise; in which the heroine begins by committing a rape, and ends with killing her man in a duel.

A proposal for a Reform in Law-proceedings, published under the name of an eminent barrister, will greatly astonish the gentlemen of the long robe, and occasion much debate as to its authenticity, till a statute of lunacy taken out against the author will clear up the matter.

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REMARKS ON THE CHARGE OF JACOBINISM.

IT has at all times been so common an artifice of party to stigmatise its adversaries by some opprobrious name, that particular examples of the fact may be deemed unworthy of notice. Yet, where individuals actually suffer from the impudent licentiousness with which this is done, and obnoxious ideas are associated in the public mind which have not the least real connection, some appeal to truth and reason, on the part of the injured, is natural, if not necessary. I conceive this at present to be the case with respect to the charge of *Jacobinism*, so industriously brought forward on all occasions, by a certain set of writers, against all who disapprove of the measures of ministers, however differing from each other in political principles, and however free the greater part may be from any designs which can justify such an imputation.

Every one acquainted with the history of the French Revolution must know, that a club called the *Jacobins*, from the place of their meeting in Paris, connected with a number of others throughout the kingdom, openly attempted to overcome the legal representatives of the nation, to overturn a constitution established by general consent, and to involve every thing in anarchy and confusion, that no obstacle might exist to their schemes. The essence of *Jacobinism*, according to its true signification, then, is—

To hold that a majority may lawfully be governed by a minority, upon the pretext of the public good:

To pay no regard to the will of the nation, as declared by those who have been fairly delegated for the purpose:

To scruple no means, however base or violent, to compass a political end:

To consider absolute anarchy, and the destruction of all natural and civil rights, as a cheap purchase for speculative improvements in a constitution.

I am sure I have no objection that every man in this kingdom, who avows, either in word or action, these principles, should by name be exposed as a Jacobin to the hatred and suspicion of his fellow-citizens.

But it is *not Jacobinism* to maintain—

That government was instituted for the good of the many, not the emolument of the few:

That there at all times exists, in the majority of a political society, a right of making such alterations in their form of government, as upon mature deliberation they shall think conducive to the public welfare:

That privileged bodies derive all title to their privileges from the consent and advantage of the whole:

That, therefore, wars and public burdens for the particular interest of those bodies are a public injustice:

That a friend of mankind may wish well to the cause of liberty all over the globe, without waiting for the permission of his own partial or prejudiced countrymen.

Finally, *Republicanism*, the spirit of which is, in fact, the very essence of every thing free in political constitutions, is not *Jacobinism*, but the very reverse.

ON THE PROBABILITY OF A

FUTURE MELIORATION IN THE STATE OF MANKIND.

THAT man, who, during the course of a few late years, has not made very serious reflections on the condition and prospects of his fellow-creatures; who has not been agitated with alternate hopes and fears, and felt his wishes and expectations in a state of perpetual tumult and fluctuation, must either have been absorbed in stupid and selfish indifference, or must have arrived at that state of security concerning all human affairs which is the highest point of philosophy. For my own part, I have been far from either of those conditions. I have most ardently sympathised in the surrounding scenes; but from the present view of things, I could wish that the tranquillity arising not from indifference, but from philosophy, should succeed to the painful suspense and uneasy apprehensions of a mind too strongly impressed by actual events. This, too, may probably be the state of many others. Let us then see, if, by meditating on the past and present state of mankind, we can discover any principles which may reconcile us to what we behold, and secure us for the future against the folly and the pain of expectations never likely to be gratified.

The human race has now subsisted some thousand years, and under all the differences of climate and external circumstances that can be supposed incident to it. With respect to what we call *civilisation*, likewise, it seems to have undergone all the vicissitudes of which it is capable; for this has in a great many instances been carried to a degree, which seems to have been the direct cause of its own decline. States more commercial, more military, more polished, more luxurious, than have already existed, are not likely again to appear on the theatre of the world. What then remains on which to found expectations of a new state of things, unless it be *knowledge?* This, in fact, is the present anchor of our hopes for a meliorated condition of mankind; it is, therefore, a matter of high importance to consider what that improvement in knowledge must be which is to effect this desirable change, and what are the probabilities of its taking place.

Knowledge may, in a loose way, be divided into that which is a source of happiness in itself, and that which is a means of producing happiness. With respect to the former, inasmuch as it contributes to the enjoyment of individuals by affording interesting and agreeable occupations for their leisure, and by dignifying and exalting their natures, it cannot, I fear, be made a ground of much advantage to the great mass of mankind. For too few in society can ever possess leisure and opportunity sufficient for the pursuit, or if they have these, will prefer the pleasures of knowledge to the more obvious ones flowing from the affections and the senses, to render advances in literature and science the source of much substantial benefit to the world. It may be added, that as it is *pursuit* and *progress*, rather than real attainment of any precise objects, which gives the pleasure in this case, an *advanced* state of knowledge is not more favourable than an *early* and *immature* one, to the happiness of its votaries. Whatever may be the modern improvements in physics and metaphysics, the ardour, and consequently the delight, with which they are pursued, cannot now be much greater than that felt by the philosophers of antiquity.

The other species of knowledge is to be regarded as a means to an end; and, from the nature of mankind, formed capable of transmitting the experience and discoveries of one generation to another, and thus making unlimited progress in the adaptation of the fittest means to the best ends, we may very reasonably expect an addition to the stock of general good from this source. But, in order to form some estimate of its amount, it will be first necessary to consider of what ingredients human happiness is composed, and how far it lies within the power of man to add to or diminish the general sum.

There is, indeed, an opinion that many seem fond of maintaining, which, if true, would render unnecessary every consideration of this sort, and induce us to sit down in perfect apathy: this is, that good and evil are so equally balanced in all the different states and conditions of mankind, that what is gained on one side, is lost on the other, and *vice versâ;* so that it can never be worth while to attempt a melioration, by which nothing can be really acquired in point of happiness. And if happiness be the true end and object of our being, it is certain that a change, which does not conduce to its augmentation, is but an idle waste of our industry. But, surely, a fair and impartial survey of the world can never lead to such a conclusion. Place happiness as low as we please—let it consist in mere animal enjoyments, and that security of life and its comforts, and that freedom of action, which even a savage must prize—and we cannot be insensible of the superior advantages which some states of society offer in these respects over others. It is impossible for any one seriously to suppose, that the American or English farmer, surrounded with plenty, which no one can hinder him from enjoying, and resting in full peace and tranquillity under the protection of strong and equal laws, is not a happier being than the cultivator of the Turkish dominions, who is forced to hide the little wealth he possesses, lest it should be forcibly taken from him; and fears a brutal and insolent foe in the person of every one stronger or better armed than himself. The difference here is nothing less than fanciful—it bears upon the solid comfort of every day, and comes home to the feelings of every human creature.

The happiness of man, as far as it applies to the whole species, will probably never admit of a high or complex estimate. Sensual gratifications, and the ordinary pleasures of social and domestic life, may be reckoned to compose almost the whole of it. As already observed, the wants of mankind are too many to allow to the majority leisure enough for intellectual pursuits; nor are the enjoyments arising from that source, so strong and constant in their attraction, as those from the two former. I have, therefore, no idea of a higher degree of happiness, attainable by a community, than that proceeding from abundance of the necessaries and most obvious conveniences of life, fairly shared, and temperately used; from peace, security, freedom of action, and mutual kindness and good offices. To these may be added, immunity from those superstitious terrors, and self tormenting practices, which have attended so many forms of false religion. Now let us inquire how far the increase of knowledge accruing from experience, is likely to further these desirable objects among the great family of mankind.

Not much need be said concerning the improvements in the common arts of life in this view. Being almost all of them the offspring of necessity, they can scarcely do more than keep pace with the demands of that necessity. Such is the natural increase of the human species when not checked by unfavourable circumstances, that there will be perpetual occasion for the full employment of the human abilities to prevent the share of good things already possessed by each individual from being diminished. The utmost improvement of agriculture can only give wholesome and palatable food to greater numbers than are now fed from the same extent of land: the like may be said of all other branches of economics and manufactures, at least in every country where already enough has been discovered to make life comfortable. Most countries in Europe might probably maintain a much larger population than they possess; but what has the sum of population to do with the happiness of the individuals which compose it? This has long ago, in China and Japan, reached its *maximum*, and in its consequences has pushed the more essential arts of life to a degree of perfection much beyond what we see among ourselves; but it seems to have been very far from meliorating the condition of the species.

A much more promising consequence of increased knowledge, is the improvement to be expected from it in government, legislation, and all the contrivances by which a community are secured in the enjoyment of those advantages which nature and industry bestow. Here seems, indeed, to be a wide and almost boundless field for melioration; for old as the world is, how very few examples has it yet seen of civil institutions, purely and fairly framed with a view to the production of the greatest possible good! How difficult it would be to name a single one in which partial interests have not, in many important points, taken the lead of general interests! But, in order to know what improvements may be expected in this matter, it will be necessary to consider what errors have been owing to *ignorance*, and *ill intention.* The former may perhaps admit a cure; the latter hardly can, unless the majority become so enlightened concerning their interests, and so wise, steady, and unanimous in the pursuit of them, as to overcome all that resistance which the possessors of undue advantages will always make to a change unfavourable to themselves.

That ignorance on the part of rulers, in the true principles of legislation, police, and the other branches of government, has been, and is, the cause of much evil to nations, cannot be doubted. And as it must be, upon the whole, the interest of rulers to see their subjects flourishing and happy enough to be kept in good humour, there seems no reason to doubt, that in proportion as prejudices and false conceptions give way to the gradual progress of truth, many improvements will be made in these particulars which will materially better the state of mankind. I make no question but much has been done during the course of the present century, to amend the distribution of private justice, to check the oppression of the great, and to secure life and property to all the members of a state, in almost every country in Europe. Industry has been more encouraged, trade freed from many impolitic shackles, punishments rendered less cruel, and, in general, a more just and liberal spirit of internal government has been introduced. The rule of a Frederick and a Catherine, despotic as the principles of both have been, cannot be denied to be much more lenient, and better calculated to promote the public welfare, than that of their predecessors.

All this is very well as far as it goes. But since arbitrary rulers must ever have an interest nearer and dearer to them than the happiness of their subjects, viz. that of their power, they will never willingly acquiesce in promoting the public improvement with respect to those points on which this power is founded. And as great part of the worst abuses in corrupt governments are intimately connected with the maintenance of the sovereign authority, it is vain to expect that they will ever be reformed till the people themselves come to understand and pursue their own interests. But here is the great difficulty. How is it possible that the mass of a nation should ever, in the hands of their old masters, become enlightened enough to comprehend their evils, and the remedies of them—should be able peaceably to deliberate about them, and take proper steps for their relief—should avoid the snares of crafty demagogues, and pursue steadily the right objects by the wisest means—and, finally, amidst the unjust opposition they would be sure to meet with, should preserve their minds from that irritation which will in the end break out in acts of the most dreadful violence? Alas! have we not too well learned what a nation will do that rises to revenge those injuries which either wisdom cannot, or selfishness will not, redress in a proper time and manner? But they should first have been enlightened, say the friends of knowledge and liberty. How? when their meetings for instruction are prevented by the bayonet; when the press is shackled by penal restrictions; and when hired teachers will tell the people that they have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them? The melioration of mankind by means of political revolutions, is, indeed, a noble subject of speculation; and I am far from asserting, that the hopes of patriots on this head are futile and visionary; but, for my own part, I have only the *wish* left—the *confidence* is gone.

But are there not modes in which increased knowledge may more quietly and gradually meliorate the condition of mankind? May we not expect much from improved systems of morality?—for, morals being in fact nothing else than such a rule of life as will promote the greatest degree of happiness; and the art of living happily being as much an experimental art as any other, will it not be making a continual progress in human societies, who can have no interest so dear to them as carrying it to perfection? This, undoubtedly, seems a plausible deduction; but, I fear, an impartial survey of history will not permit us to be very sanguine in our expectations. Has it, in reality, appeared that either individuals or bodies of men, in proportion as they have advanced in those branches of knowledge which adorn and elevate the species, have been more just, more temperate, more beneficent?

What are the great moral evils under which mankind labour? Are they not, with respect to ourselves, the indulgence of our appetites and passions, and false estimates of happiness, proceeding from vicious associations—with respect to others, the preference we give to our own interests above that of the community?—And are not these propensities interwoven in our very nature, and only to be controlled by a long course of discipline? Is the man of *knowledge*, to whom so many new sources of enjoyment are opened, less likely to grasp with eagerness at the means of attaining those enjoyments, than the illiterate and easily satisfied peasant? Can luxury ever be separated from refinement, avarice from commerce, or rapacity from power? It is granted, that a strong and enlightened system of government may check many of the *public* mischiefs which would flow from these sources; but how, without intolerable restraints upon freedom of action, shall it prevent the *private* ones? Look at our manufacturing towns, and try to separate, even in idea, the vices and miseries that overrun them, from the circumstance of a vast population composed of artificers, who, if their wages are low, must employ their whole time in providing the necessaries of life; if high, will lie under temptations to excess, which they have no principles that can enable them to resist. The almost insuperable difficulties experienced in every plan for amending the state of the yearly increasing poor in great towns, sufficiently evinces the intimate connection between private calamity, and what has always appeared to constitute public prosperity.

The new order of things which seemed opening upon Europe, afforded no prospect more flattering to the lovers of mankind, than that of a probable extinction of the wars which from the earliest records have never ceased to ravage the world. It was very plausibly argued, that since nothing was more demonstrable than the preponderance of evil which a war brought even upon the successful party, as soon as nations should become capable of pursuing as well as discovering their true interests, the sword would no longer be resorted to for the decision of their differences. But the first consequence of the French Revolution has been a very extensive and most bloody war, entered into with as much eagerness and animosity by the several parties as any former one; and, in the mean time, three potentates have joined unmolested in a scheme of sharing between them one of the principal portions of Europe, and abolishing a rising liberty which had every plea of justice in its favour. Nor does it appear, that a temporary peace can be restored without leaving abundant seeds of future discord; or that even the greatest sufferers by the war, are likely to be cured of the fatal propensity to rush again into quarrels on the slightest occasions of ambition or contention. War is in so many ways the author of misery, and the obstacle of melioration, that unless somewhat decisive shall be effected for abolishing it from the ordinary course of human affairs, it may be affirmed, that *nothing* comparatively is done towards a better state of things. The propensity to national hostility has already withstood all the efforts of a religion apparently promulgated for the express purpose of restoring peace on earth. It did not, even when its influence was strongest, bestow the shortest breathing-time on mankind: and its ministers have long been, and are at the present day, some of the most active promoters of the horrid spirit of mutual enmity. The banner is consecrated at the altar before it is dipped in blood; and prayers are solemnly offered up in every church in Christendom for success in every act of public violence that the sovereign of each country shall please to engage in.

The spirit of commerce too, which so much distinguishes the present age, instead of binding the nations in a golden chain of mutual peace and friendship, seems only to have given additional motives for war. Each state aims at a monopoly, only to be established by an armed force; and the improvements of navigation have contracted the dimensions of the world so as not to allow space enough for the schemes of a merchant's counting-house. Further, the present system of trade can only be maintained by the slavery or subjugation of great numbers of mankind; and while the East and West Indies compose links in the chain of European commerce, cruelty and injustice must be the means by which it is made to hold together.

From these considerations, I fear, we have very insufficient grounds to suppose, that the desired melioration of the world upon *public* principles is as yet commenced. All that a comparison of this century with the last will allow us with certainty to infer, is greater lenity and regularity in the administration of government in some countries; more encouragement to the exertions of industry; and a desire in governors to participate in the improvements made by art and science, which has the good effect of inciting them to encourage the means of advancing useful knowledge, though often from narrow and selfish motives. If, in opposition to these advantages, be set the prodigious increase of standing armies; the vast accumulation of national debts and burthens; and the extinction of a spirit of independence in numbers of the middle and superior ranks of society, while the lowest are doomed to ceaseless toil in order to gain a mere subsistence, I question if the most sanguine friend of mankind can strike a fair balance which will give him much satisfaction.

But, not to dwell entirely upon the dark side of the prospect, I shall state a few circumstances of *private* improvement, on which I think we may safely place some reliance.

It is impossible to doubt that, in all the more civilised parts of the world, superstition and bigotry, those bitter foes of human happiness, have lost much of their power; and that this has been owing to that progress of good sense and knowledge which may be expected to go on still further diminishing their influence. It is true, the connection between old systems of belief and old claims of authority, may for a while maintain the struggle of falsehood and violence, against truth and equity; but I would fain hope that imposture and persecution have received their death wound in Europe, and will never again be able to produce the follies and miseries under which men so many ages groaned. Religious systems are still, indeed, full of error, and are little, if at all, mended in their principles; but the spirit of the times has been too potent for them, and doubt or indifference has effected what mere argument could not have done. Emancipation from the servile dread of supernatural evils, and from the burthensome and degrading practices by which they were to be averted, is a gain in point of happiness which cannot be too highly prized. It enters deep into the comfort of private life, and makes all the difference between a freeman and a slave. And that increased lenity in governments and liberality in individuals, which renders the profession of a different religious faith from the established one, no longer dangerous or degrading, is a most important advantage to all dissidents.

The great diffusion of knowledge, though perhaps of a superficial kind, among ranks of people who formerly possessed scarcely the smallest portion of it, has certainly added much to the pleasures and variety of life; and if it has tended to soften and humanise the manners, and introduced a greater love for sedentary amusements, and the pursuits of cultivated leisure, I own I am one of those who think this a good exchange against the rough vigour and rude simplicity of former ages. Nor can it escape any observer, that even the amusive writings of the present day are almost invariably friendly to decency, humanity, generosity, and all the finer and nobler feelings of the heart. And as a consequence of the propagation of such sentiments, the virtues of charity, beneficence, and affability, were certainly never more conspicuous. From these considerations, I am not willing to accept the concession of a very zealous believer in the progression of the human race, the late Condorcet, who asserts "that though much has been done for the glory of mankind, scarcely any thing has yet been done for its happiness." It is true, that the continuance of destructive wars, and of the immense inequality of conditions, perpetuates a vast mass of evils in society; yet these evils, which at no period did not exist, are undoubtedly softened by modern manners; and private life has in various respects been made happier to all ranks of people.

But I own that the very circumstance of some improvement in these points, leads me to despair of those radical and effectual meliorations which many expect from vigorous schemes of reform, conducted upon principles of general interest and public virtue. Our situation has too many advantages to be readily hazarded; and the exertions requisite to maintain those advantages too much occupy our minds to allow of the application of much time and attention to matters remotely concerning ourselves. Our tempers, too, with the sternness, have lost the force, of the heroic ages; nor do I conceive that any considerable number of us would be capable of going through the rough work of a reformation when brought from theory to practice. If the instance of a neighbouring nation be brought to refute the notion of a necessary connection between advancement in civilisation and effeminacy of character; it may be urged, on the other hand, that the shocking calamities which have attended its revolutionary exertions will with certainty for a long time render its history more a warning than an example to other nations. Melioration, according to its warmest advocates, cannot be effected without overthrowing all usurpations in government, all impositions in religion, rooting up all prejudices, levelling all artificial distinctions, and equalizing mankind so far as can be done consistently with the fundamental principles of social union. But where are the engines by which these mighty operations are to be brought about? The pulpit, the bar, the sword, are already engaged in support of existing institutions; and the press, on which the chief reliance of reformers is placed, is at least half bought by the same powerful bidders. Not a single axiom on which the rights of man are founded, has been able to fix itself beyond the reach of assault. All is disputed; and where argument fails, authority is called in to give succour; while wit and eloquence fight indiscriminately on either side.

I shall conclude with one more reflection which forcibly presses upon me. All the proofs that have been adduced of the amended state of mankind, and all that I have admitted as real or probable, relate only to Europe and her immediate connections, and not even to the whole of that. But what a small portion of the human race does this comprehend! The last accounts of China state the population of that empire alone at upwards of three hundred millions, of which sum all Europe can only show a trifling fraction. Who can with the least probability suggest improvement in that ancient, vain and prejudiced people, who only know enough of us and our institutions to suspect and despise us? Who pretends to see less ferocity in the African, less pride in the Turk, less rapine in the Arab, less perfidy in the Indian, less cruelty in the Persian? Alas! while we are overwhelmed at home with business enough to occupy reformation for centuries, all these vast regions have not yet heard the word sound in their ears, and would probably shudder at the proposal of any innovation as the direst of crimes! The imagination can scarcely conceive that change which should render our books, our knowledge, our opinions, familiar to these people. Nothing but entire conquest would seem anywise adequate to this effect; and what a Pandora's box does that word *conquest* comprise! Better, surely, that the world should remain in its present mixed and imperfect state, than that an uniformity of good should be aimed at by means which are themselves the greatest of evils!

ON TOLERATION IN RUSSIA.

THERE has lately been published by a German divine an account of the state of religious toleration in Russia, which appears to me not only to contain some curious matter of fact, but to afford important matter for reflection also. Both these will form the topics of the following paper.

For three centuries past it has been the practice of the Russian sovereigns to indulge strangers in the free enjoyment of their religious worship; and under the name of strangers appear to have been included those numerous tribes or nations which have been adopted into the Russian empire by submission or conquest. This policy has probably been derived from the Turks and other eastern nations; and it has, in later reigns, been enforced by the necessity of inviting strangers in order to carry into effect the great plans of civilisation and improvement, which have been transmitted from one sovereign to another. The *Account* in question was drawn up in the time of the late empress Catherine, whose *managing* spirit reduced this, like every other public concern, into a system. The following are its essential points. All religions are tolerated in Russia. Christian of every denomination, Jew, Mahometan, Pagan, may each worship his God or Gods, in the way his father has done before him. Neither is there any thing like a religious test for admission to public offices. The first persons in the civil and military departments are Greek, Roman-catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, &c. as it may happen. The sovereign's choice is a sufficient qualification; nothing exists to control it. Yet there is a national church, strongly marked by its privileges, and perfectly secured against that dread of all churches, innovation. In the first place, though the different sectaries may change at pleasure from one church to another, yet the true native Russian must inviolably adhere to the religion in which he is born, the Greek: any change in him is apostacy; and foreign ecclesiastics are forbidden to receive a Russian into their communities. Nay, if a foreigner once conforms to the established religion, he is fixed in it for ever. If a foreigner's children, in defect of a minister of his own persuasion, chance to receive baptism from a Greek priest, they must likewise ever remain members of the national church. Moreover, in marriages between a Russian and a foreigner, the offspring, without a very particular dispensation from the court, must be brought up in the Greek faith. The marriage ceremony, even of strangers, must always be performed according to the Russian ritual; but this, indeed, imposes no subsequent obligation on the parties, or their children.

Such is the plan philosophical despotism has formed for the management of religion in a great empire; and I doubt not there are many who will admire it as an extraordinary effort both of liberality and of good policy. It may seem to unite in the happiest manner the support of a national church with a regard to the rights of conscience in those who have been educated in a different communion; and may be thought equally to guard against the evils of innovation, and those of a forced uniformity. For myself, however, I cannot but consider it as a remarkable instance of the impudence of power—of the propensity of mortals elevated by station above their fellow-creatures, to assume the prerogative of dictating to them in their most important concerns. The spirit of the preceding regulations is this—"All religions are equal—equally true, or equally false. It is useful to the sovereign to have a prevailing one under his special influence and protection; yet it is not worth while to quarrel with strangers, or deprive the state of their services, for the sake of uniformity. Subjects, however, are to be taught, that the choice of religion does not belong to them, but to their master. They are to follow authority in that, as in any other matter of civil regulation; and it would be punishable presumption in them to decide for themselves, as if *they* had any concern in the conclusion. A person *may be* of any religion he is commanded to be —he may bring his soul to submit as well as his body; and no duty can be supposed to supersede that of absolute submission to the sovereign." This manner of considering the subject is, in fact, a greater affront to the human understanding, than the power assumed by a Spanish Inquisition. The latter founds all its authority upon the supposition that what it maintains is exclusively the *truth,* and truth of the highest importance to mankind; and its effects to make *conviction* the basis of that uniformity of belief and practice which it compels. It equally, indeed, with the other, denies the right of private judgment; but it is on the plea that the matter has already been judged by the only competent tribunal; and it will not permit reasons of state or local circumstances to sway the decision of points not amenable to civil jurisdiction. The Russian scheme is evidently formed upon political considerations; but it is accommodated only to a nation, the great body of which are stupid barbarians. It proves that despots, with all the free thinking they may profess, are only half philosophers. They would gladly enjoy all the benefit which can arise from the mental energies of their slaves, without taking off their shackles when acting for themselves. But to reduce the mind to such a state of discipline is beyond their power. It will not be limited in its exertions. It will not expand itself freely upon topics of comparatively small consequence, and pass over those of the greatest. While the native Russians are to be mere hewers of wood, and drawers of water, they may perhaps be made to continue to worship pictures bought at their *god shops*, and fast and pray just as their priests bid them. But if the noble plan is really pursued of reclaiming a great people from barbarism, and placing them on a level with the most enlightened nations of Europe, they must be allowed at least as much liberty as the strangers who come to teach them, and not have their religion chosen for them like a footman's livery, or a soldier's regimentals. How mean and barbarous is this policy, as well as every other scheme for restraining free inquiry, compared with the simple transatlantic plan of leaving religion, like other matters of individual concern, to the care of individuals themselves, secure that it can never injure the peace of a well regulated state, as long as the state abstains from interposing in its differences!

MILITARY PIETY.

"WAR,* (says an eminent writer) is so bad a thing, that nothing but a mixture of religion can make it worse." This, however, by no means appears to be the general opinion, and the union of the military and religious character is one of the most popular ideas of the time. Indeed it could scarcely be otherwise, when we are engaged in a war, one great object of which is the support of religion of every species against atheism and impiety; and when we have the happiness to be connected with allies so distinguished for religious zeal. It is peculiarly edifying to be informed of the exemplary regularity observed by that humane and civilised body, the Russian soldiery, in the performance of their devotions This, indeed, is not to be wondered at, since the very robbers of that nation are equally punctilious in this respect. We are told by a writer of credit, that a famous Russian leader of banditti, whose thirst for human blood was such, that he was accustomed to tie his captives to a tree, and open their breasts while alive, in order that he might drink the vital fluid fresh and warm; on being asked by his confessor, as he was led to execution, whether he had duly observed the fasts and festivals of the church? was affronted with the question, and in his turn asked the priest whether he did not take him for a christian? Under the late conscientious empress Catherine, the Russian court-manifestoes were remarkable beyond any in Europe for solemn appeals to the Deity; and it is to be presumed that her successor has not degenerated in this point. The accounts that have been published of the devotional spirit of the celebrated conqueror of Ismael and Praga, cannot fail of giving high delight to those who regard him as the destined restorer of monarchy and catholicism in France. As there is always something interesting in the parallels between great men in different periods, I shall beg leave to place beside these the sketch given by Brantome of an illustrious commander of his time, also a distinguished chief in a catholic league, the constable of France, Anne de Montmorenci.

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* Written during the French revolution war.

"Every morning (says the historian) whether he was at home or in the army, on a march or in camp, he never neglected to recite and hear his *paternosters.* But it was a saying among the soldiers, 'Take care of the *paternosters* of Monsieur the Constable;' for whilst he was muttering them over, he would throw in, by way of parenthesis, as the occasions of discipline or war demanded, 'Hang me that fellow on the next tree—pass me that other through the pikes—bring me hither that man and shoot him before my face—cut me in pieces all those rascals who are so audacious as to defend that steeple against the king—burn me that village—set fire to all the country for a quarter of a league round:' and all this he would do without the least interruption to his devotions, which he would have thought it a sin to defer to another hour, *so tender was his conscience!*"

This I think an admirable picture of a soldier's devotion; and though it is not quite suited to an English camp or quarter-deck, it would, I suppose, appear natural enough in a Russian field marshal, or a bashaw of three-tails; whom we are now so happy as to be entitled in some measure to call *our own.*

INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF FAMILY PRIDE.

MORALISTS and Divines agree in the condemnation of *pride,* from whatever source it is derived; but some kinds of it have ever been treated with lighter censure than others; and some, in the common estimate, have even been elevated into laudable principles of action, and have been supposed to denote an exalted soul. The pride of virtue among the ancient philosophers, especially of the Stoic sect, though it was apt to inspire an arrogant and unamiable demeanor, certainly in many cases raised the mind above every thing mean and vulgar, and proved an incitement to worthy conduct. Similar effects have usually been attributed to the *pride of family;* and no common place is more frequent in works of fiction, and even in popular morality, than the influence of high descent in dignifying the sentiments, and prompting to noble deeds. It is obvious, that the reality of such effects must depend upon the character and foundation of this species of pride; for the mere affection of pride, consisting in a high estimate of one's-self, is more likely to debase than to ennoble, to repress than to rouse, since it supposes the object already attained for the sake of which great exertions are made. Let us therefore inquire into the actual source of family pride, as prevailing among ourselves. It is possible, that its character may admit of different shades and variations from local circumstances; yet I should imagine, that it must every where derive its essence from the general principles of human nature.

There are two grounds upon which a sentiment of this kind may be made to appear not unreasonable; one, the supposition that superior qualities are actually transmitted in certain families by pro-creation; the other, that descendants possess a sort of inheritance in the public merits of their ancestors.

With respect to the first, as it is an undoubted fact, that not only the bodily but the mental constitution of parents is, in some degree, renovated in their children; it was no improbable opinion that those qualities which in a rude state of society had raised the possessors above their fellows, should, for a time at least, shine conspicuous in their lineal progeny. A race of Heraclidæ might long be distinguished by a portion of the strength and fortitude of their great progenitor. Horace, by the analogy of the brute creation, supports his position of

> "*Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis:*"
> "The brave and good produce the good and brave."

It was unfortunate, that the race of human beings by whom he exemplified his doctrine, was the family of the *Nero's;* but he was a poet and not a prophet, and could not foresee how soon a name which great qualities had raised to honour, might be rendered eternally infamous by the vices of a degenerate offspring. In more modern times it has been asserted, that valour, honour, and good sense, have been hereditary in certain families; and epitaphs have told of noble breeds of which "all the males were brave, and all the females virtuous." But in a long line, so many accidents may happen to interrupt the stream of propagated excellencies, that I presume the credit of such pretensions is quite at an end. Nor do I suppose, that the inheritors of high blood would themselves be forward to put in claims which might excite too large expectations in the public. Who would venture to profess himself an heir to the political wisdom of a Cecil, or the military talents of a Churchill? The truth is, that natural perfections of mind and body are indifferently the lot of all conditions of life; and the chance is just the same, as far as birth is concerned, that a Bacon or a Newton should honour the palace or the cottage. Every thing further is the result of education; and whether that of the great be best adapted to carry the human species to its highest degree of perfection, may be left to the great themselves to determine. Scarcely any man, therefore, is probably proud of his descent on the supposition, that he has derived from it moral or intellectual endowments superior to those of mankind in general. And with respect to the body, they who talk, almost as if they understood it literally, of the purity of the blood which flows in their veins, must be perpetually recalled from the pleasing delusion, by the homeliness, deformities, and hereditary diseases, which render so many noble races extremely bad specimens of the human form divine.

The supposed participation in the merits of ancestors is next to be considered as a ground of family pride.

The public gratitude, which, in its displays, has frequently comprehended with the person of a public benefactor those of his children, and even of his remote descendants, has given a sanction to this notion of *transmitted merit,* and proved it to have a foundation in human nature. Yet reason and reflection must teach, that every tribute paid by society on this account, has its just bounds; that present demerit may cancel all the claims of past desert; and that even length of time may obliterate the debt. We can scarcely conceive of services so great, that they may not be repaid in honour and emolument, if not to the person himself, at least to his immediate representatives; and it is evident, that, were public rewards to be perpetuated to all posterity, future generations would find the stock anticipated, by which they should remunerate benefits of their own growth. In order to establish a just title to the honours associated with a noble name, along with the name there should be a transmission of a portion of the character and principles which first made it the object of respect. If a race of Publicolas think it a duty affixed to their appellation, to continue from age to age the guardians of the people's rights, they will continue entitled to their attachment and veneration; but if they dwindle down to the satellites of a court, how shall they dare to arrogate respect on account of their relation to ancestors whose principles they have renounced, and whose actions, by their own conduct, they disavow? No consideration, indeed, ought to be more awful, or even oppressive to the mind, than that of being the representative of men whose remembrance will ever live in the breasts of their admiring countrymen: for what is its effect, but that of providing a perpetual fund for humiliating comparisons? This is the topic particularly dwelt upon, with a mixture of humour and indignation, by the manly Juvenal, in his energetic satire upon nobility.

But the claim to public reverence on account of the signal *merits* of ancestors, be it well or ill founded, cannot possibly come within the view of a great majority of those who boast of *family*. From the august genealogies of kings and emperors, down to the pedigrees of country squires, how few are there which can exhibit characters of distinguished virtue or abilities, or to whom their country can justly be reckoned indebted! If names now and then occur, which the historian has deigned to record among the actors in memorable events, it is to be considered, that high stations are necessarily the lot of property and influence; and that transactions of great moment, which are conducted by the united exertions of many, are often ascribed to an individual, who had no other share in them, than that of being the nominal head. Battles are gained, and negotiations brought to effect, under the auspices of persons of rank, in whose abilities perhaps not the least confidence is placed even by those who employ them. They merely serve for the decoration; while all the real business is done by men not highly born enough to dispense with professional knowledge. Thus the brave and skilful Chevert obtained a victory and a marshal's staff for the prince de Soubise; concerning which it was wittily said in an epigram, "Who should have the staff, but he who cannot walk alone?" But without entering into a rigorous scrutiny, but making a liberal allowance of every *imputed* public service, it may be asked, Will our men of family consent to take precedence, according to the aggregate of meritorious deeds recorded of the whole race? It will not, I believe, come under the charge of *scandalum magnatum* to affirm, that the nobility and gentry, neither of this, nor of any other country, would acquiesce in such a proposal. In fact, a person must be little acquainted with the sentiments that really prevail in the world, to suppose that the pride of ancestry has, in general, any connection whatever with merit, either genuine or imputed. Its grounds are, simply, relative superiority of condition, together with the length of time in which that superiority has been enjoyed. It is, therefore, no other than *a modification of the pride of wealth;* and while more absurd in its application than this sentiment, it is not at all more elevated or dignified in its nature.

The English nobleman who traces his lineage to one "who came in with the Conqueror," is content to refer his origin to a soldier of fortune, a subaltern leader of banditti, who, for his assistance in turning out the lawful possessors, was rewarded with a share of their property. He was brave, as were all his Norman countrymen. The greedy appetite for spoil would lead him, as it would the meanest of his band, to confront any dangers; but he was ignorant, unlettered, unprincipled, and brutal. By the number of vassals he brought into the field, was estimated the proportion of conquered land that fell to his share; and this proportion constituted the sole difference between the greater and the inferior families built upon this foundation. Where the spoil was half or the whole of a county, it gave rise to an earldom or barony, which, descending through various fortunes to the present time, has conferred the highest hereditary honours this kingdom affords. Now, the original mode in which this property was acquired, certainly conveys no valuable lesson to a descendant; and amidst the train through which it has successively passed, may probably be found all that variety of character and conduct which the human condition, joined to power and wealth, is likely to produce. Some of them were, of course, generals, ministers, heads of factions, now on the royal, now on the popular side, as it suited their interests; now rewarded with new honours and possessions as supporters of the crown, now attainted and brought to the scaffold as traitors. "Treason, sacrilege, and proscription, (says Gibbon,) are often the best titles of ancient nobility." Is it, then, from a moral or intellectual estimate of such men as these, that the idea of a noble and illustrious race is derived by the judges of family consequence—the adepts in heraldry and genealogy? No.—It is quite sufficient for them to trace Bohuns and Mowbrays from century to century, as the possessors of certain hereditary honours, and the owners of certain manors; and all individuals are sunk in the abstract notion of a *great house.* The Spaniards, though prouder of nobility than any nation in

Europe gave to their original great landholders only the appropriate title of *Ricos Hombres*—rich men.

The untitled country gentleman cannot be supposed to entertain more elevated ideas of ancestry than the ennobled patrician. The connection of his *name* with a *certain parcel of land* at a remote period, is all that he thinks it incumbent upon him to establish in proof of his gentility; and the measure of his relative consequence is the number of acres in this land, combined with the length of time during which his family have been the possessors of it. These two considerations, it is true, somewhat interfere; so that it may become a matter of doubt, whether an ancient race of small property be not more honourable than a more modern one with ampler possessions: and this is one of the modifications by which the pride of family somewhat differs from the simple pride of wealth. But the foundation of both being the same, namely, distinction from the mass of people by a superiority in riches, it does not appear how the mere circumstance of the length of time in which this has been enjoyed, can constitute any essential difference in effect. In this country, where certainly more sobriety and consistency in estimating the advantages of life prevail than in most others, it is very seldom that the proudest gentleman of ancient descent will refuse to ally himself to superior wealth and influence, how recent soever be their date. What is usually meant when it is said, Such an one is a person of *good family?* Is any other idea excited, than that of opulence and living at ease? Do not we immediately paint to ourselves a good landed estate, a rich church preferment, or a thriving profession? And if any moral notions associate themselves with the word *good,* are they not merely such as naturally belong to a condition which rises above the ordinary temptations to meanness and dishonesty, and renders it easy to perform acts of generosity and liberality? In this sense, is the gentleman of ancient name superior to the wealthy trader of yesterday?

Whatever be the forms under which family pride appears, they are for the most part only varieties of self-consequence derived from property. Thus, when a person boasts that his ancestors have never sullied themselves with low or mercenary employments, what is it but boasting that they have been able to live upon their hereditary possessions, without any exertions of personal industry? The rich trader may promise the same hereafter for himself and his descendants, as long as the wealth he has accumulated shall last. And if the gentleman falls into poverty, what becomes of his boast? He will scorn, perhaps, to cringe behind a counter; but he will not scruple to bow at a minister's levee. He will think it beneath him to practise for gain any useful talents he may possess; but he will deem it honourable to let himself out to hire, for the purpose of butchering those who never offended him, on the mere considerations of pay and plunder. He will be a venal senator, a prostitute lawyer, or an unbelieving priest, without derogating from gentility. But is not the man who goes to market with his conscience, as much a trader as if he set up a stall at a fair; with this difference only, that he deals in a viler commodity than ever came out of a manufacturer's hands?

Does the *gentleman* value himself upon his education and manners? These, too, if of a superior kind, have only been rendered so by superiority in the means of obtaining improvement, or of appearing in society with respect and independence. None are at present better educated, than the children of many who have become opulent by commerce; as, on the other hand, instances are sufficiently common of mean and narrow educations given to inferior branches of great families. A common literary education is within the reach of persons much beneath the rank of gentility; and as its success chiefly depends upon the motives to improve it to the best advantage, it is less to be expected from the heirs of opulence, than from those who are sensible that their livelihood must depend upon their own exertions. With respect to the extraordinary advantages of particular tuition, of travel, and the like, these are all open to the persons who can pay for them, and to no others. The *manners* which are supposed to denote a familiarity with good company, have two sources; the sense of self consequence, and the habits of artificial politeness. The first will, doubtless, attend persons of real rank and importance; but it is derived rather from station and fortune, than from what is properly called family. It is often surprisingly soon caught by men of very low origin, who arrive at posts of dignity, or high commercial prosperity; while it may be totally extinct in the needy descendant of ten noble generations. The second is an accomplishment which, like all others, must be *studied* by those who wish to excel in it. High birth is, doubtless, an advantage towards its acquisition: but the opportunities it affords are often neglected. That *arbiter elegantiarum*, Lord Chester-field, has scarcely allowed any of the first men of his time, in point of rank and office, to have had the manners and conversation of gentlemen. (See his Characters.) Indeed, the very circumstance of elevated situation may operate unfavourably upon the manners, from the carelessness it is likely to inspire with respect to pleasing in society, the desire of which is the only true source of politeness. The lowest appendages of quality are more likely to acquire that deportment which conciliates regard and good will, than their lords and patrons.

If a just interpretation of the nature and origin of family pride have been given in the preceding remarks, it will not be easy to show, why it should tend to elevate the mind, or stimulate to great and honourable exertions. We may, indeed, image to ourselves a parent exhorting his child in the warmest strains of affectionate eloquence, to prove himself the worthy descendant of a long race of heroes or patriots. But the misfortune is, when we quit fancy for reality, that these pure races are no where to be found; and it is not without great selection, that a noble youth can safely draw his examples from his genealogical table. How many names, and, perhaps, the most distinguished ones too, will occur in every line, which instead of the love of public virtue, will inspire a lawless lust of power, or an admiration of unprincipled daring; instead of the heart-felt esteem of private worth and integrity, will kindle the ambition of dazzling by splendid profligacy! The lesson he is of all the most likely to learn is, the great importance of riches; he sees how much they conduced to the consequence of his progenitors, and why should he form a different estimate of his own? If, therefore, he inherits wealth, he is proud of that wealth. If he inherits only the title and memory of past opulence, he is mortified by the contrast between his name and his circumstances; and feels no necessity so urgent, as that of retrieving the honour, that is the fortune, of his family. To one whose prejudices preclude him from many of the most useful and honest ways of gaining a fortune, such an impression must often be the cause of hurtful and dishonourable expedients. And, in fact, none have in all countries been so systematically hostile to the liberties and rights of their fellow subjects, as the brood of indigent nobility, who seem to think themselves unjustly treated by the community, as long as their revenues are inadequate to the expectations of their birth.

To revert to the question proposed as the object of inquiry,—

I conceive it to be the true nature of family pride, to institute an estimate of personal value, essentially founded upon superiority of wealth, and recurring to such a superiority for its support. It cannot, therefore, be relied upon as a solid principle for the elevation of the character. It may occasionally prompt to great and noble actions, but there is no security against its inspiring pernicious and disgraceful ones. It is inferior in worth, not only to genuine morality, but to a regard for the common good opinion of mankind, which implies a sense of community of sentiment and interest; whereas family pride is a secluding and dissociating principle.

APOLOGY FOR

THE DEMOLITION OF RUINS.

* I KNOW not where I can better apply than to your liberal publication, for the purpose of making my protest against what I conceive a very unjust censure passed upon my character. Allow me, therefore, without further preface, to state my case to your readers.

Three years ago, on the death of a distant relation, I came unexpectedly into possession of an estate situated in one of the most pleasing rural situations in this kingdom. Having always had a fondness for the country, which, till that time, professional engagements would not suffer me to indulge, I determined, without hesitation, to fix my future residence in the spot which fortune had bestowed upon me. I therefore hastened down, with the purpose of making such alterations and improvements as fancy or convenience might suggest, in a place which had been more indebted to nature than to the attention of its late possessors. In going the round of my domains, I observed in a sweet retired vale, within the flexure of a clear brook, a mass of unsightly ruins, overgrown with weeds, offering to the eye nothing

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* This fancy piece was originally sent as a communication to a periodical work.

better than some half-demolished walls, surrounding heaps of shapeless rubbish. The soil about it was rich; and the spot was well defended "from cold septentrion blasts" by a rising hillock to the north, and a tall plantation to the east. Among my little tastes, one of the strongest is a delight in the cultivation of rare and beautiful plants; and as at the instant a plan of fortifications was suggested to uncle Toby, his bowling-green presented itself to his imagination, so, on the view of this sequestered place, I cried to myself, in a kind of rapture, "What a charming situation for a botanical garden!" "And then, (I proceeded) we shall find stones enow among this rubbish for an inclosure; and on that largest heap, which overlooks the stream, I will build a little summer-house, and convert all the base of it into a piece of rock work." To make my story short, so much did this scheme run in my head, that I did not rest till it was put in execution; and if, Mr. Editor, you are a lover of plants, I may venture to say you would be delighted to see the number of beautiful vegetables which I have already established here, and would enjoy the verdant scenery round the windows of my little cabinet.

But now comes the unpleasant part of the history. Soon after the ruins were demolished, and the edifices erected upon them, a *Dr. Moulder*, a very learned man, and a distinguished fellow of the Antiquarian Society, who happened to be visiting in the neighbourhood, called one morning when I was abroad, and desired my gardener to show him about my grounds, particularly requesting to see the remains of the *convent*. "Convent! sir, (says the fellow,) we have no such thing that I ever heard of; but, perhaps, your worship means the old walls that my master pulled down when he made his new garden by the brook." "Pulled down!" cried the doctor; "what do you mean?—but show me to the place." The man took him to the vale, and was going to open the garden door, when a flat stone in the wall, on which were some traces of letters, caught the doctor's eye. He stopped short, lifted up his hands, and broke forth into exclamations which frightened the poor fellow, and of which he remembers only the words "barbarous! monstrous! sacrilege!" He then took out of his pocket a memorandum book, and began, with much pains, and no little ill-humour, to transcribe the inscription, which unfortunately gave him additional trouble by being fixed in the wall the wrong end upwards. He ended by exactly measuring the length and breadth of the stone with a pocket rule.

"Well, (says he, turning to the man,) I see you have done your work completely. I suppose you dug up the old building from the foundation?" "We did, sir, (replied he,) and a power of trouble we had with it. They say it was a famous place in the time of the Papishes. But if your worship wants to see any more gravestones, I can show you some." The doctor acquiescing in this proposal, he was led to the fragments of a few more monumental stones in different parts of the wall, the rude letters of which, where they were at all legible, he faithfully copied, and then, without deigning to pay the least attention to my *improvements*, he made the man an acknowledgment, and hastily walked off.

The circumstances of this visit, when related, only diverted me, till, a few months afterwards, an acquaintance calling upon me, "Do you know," says he, with a serious face, "what an attack has been made upon you in print?" I was startled; upon which he took out a periodical publication, renowned for its gravity in trifles, and showed me a letter concerning the lately existing remains of the Monastery of Cistercians in the parish of ———, which I presently discovered to have been written by my testy visitant. In this letter, the owner of the place was treated in the harshest terms, as "a Vandal, a foe to reverend antiquity, a violator of the dead, and a person void of all taste and all regard for literature."—"The precious relics which time and the rough hand of reformation had spared, were utterly destroyed by my ruder hands; and, as far as in me lay, I had contributed to the overthrow of one of the most pleasing and useful of studies."

To these charges, Sir, I am loth to plead guilty; for though I have not ranked in that class of men whose sole business in life is the employment of literary leisure, yet neither by education nor habit am I a total stranger to the Muses; and I trust I have a heart not inaccessible to the pleasures of knowledge nor hardened against the impressions of sentiment. I must, indeed, acknowledge that I have not learned to value a thing merely because it is old and useless: nor do my feelings plead with me in favour of relinquishing to the bones of ancient possessors the perpetual occupation of those seats which, when living, they wisely selected on account of their beauty or convenience. I see not why I should not enjoy my garden as well as the monks did theirs in the same spot; and I think it a much less crime to disturb the repose of their skeletons, than to banish Flora and

Pomona from a favourite residence. The *rights of the dead*, I confess, affect me little in comparison with those of the living; and I reckon it high time for the particles of bodies three or four centuries defunct, to return quietly to the bosom of the earth, and fulfil their destiny. As to the share of posthumous fame which may be preserved by the inscription of *Gualter de Thorpe Prior hujus Monast.*—I can accuse myself of a very small degree of injury in bringing it to a conclusion, when so many elaborate works under the tile of *Monasticons, Repertories, Topographical Remains, County Histories,* &c. have taken such laudable pains to secure the immortality of these worthies by monuments *ære perenniora.*

The motives which inspire a reverence for the remains of antiquity, and plead against their demolition, are various; but I think the rational ones may be reduced to very few. Where they possess intrinsic beauty or grandeur, and afford specimens of the taste and ingenuity of former ages, they certainly deserve preservation; as likewise where they illustrate manners and modes of living, concerning which history is silent or obscure. Also, when they are associated with any remarkable event, though not essential to the transmission of such event, I should be as unwilling as any to break an association which may excite in sensible hearts feelings of the most interesting kind. But why should ruinous piles without elegance or magnificence be left to cumber the ground, when they refer only to inconsiderable personages and ordinary modes of life, much less valuable in themselves than what has succeeded them, and at least as fully recorded as they deserve to be in the pages of history? Surely the stones of our wretched old mansions called castles, and of our gloomy monasteries, are not all so sacred, that they may not be applied to the better uses that modern taste and good sense would find for them!

INQUIRY

INTO THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF MAN.

THERE is nothing in which civilised antiquity appears more laudable, and indeed more enviable, than in the philosophical liberty it allowed of discussing speculative questions relative to some of the most important topics, without affixing either a public or a private stigma on an individual, on account of the conclusions he might deduce from his reasonings. Deriving the character of a man from the manner in which he fulfilled his duties in society, and taking for granted, that, if he acted well, he possessed the motives proper to influence him to that course of action, it regarded with great indifference the metaphysical or theological system he had chosen to adopt, and never entertained an idea of converting tenets of opinion into tests of qualification for the offices of a citizen. Our modern dogmatists, though very far from agreeing among themselves upon many fundamental points of doctrine, have yet associated their several modes of thinking so exclusively to the best principles of action, that they have refused the very name of goodness to virtues not deduced from their theories on the nature and relations of man. We have seen even so mere a matter of speculation, as the origin of evil, represented as the great hinge of morality; and a belief of that system which refers it to a supposed corruption of human nature, made the discrimination between genuine and spurious morals. That evil or imperfection exists throughout the whole sentient creation, is sufficiently obvious, but it would seem equally so, that our business can only be the correction of it; and that the means of doing this must be general to all human creatures, as far as they make use of reason and experience, whatever notions ancient fable or history may have given them concerning its origin. On this subject, as on many others, the rage for forming hypotheses seems to have created difficulties and perplexities which do not necessarily belong to it. If we content ourselves "with reasoning only from what we know," and consider the character and condition of man merely as facts in natural history, I conceive that our speculations concerning them need not be either intricate or unsatisfactory; and that we shall be able to free our minds from a mass of error and prejudice tending to bewilder our ideas and mislead our conduct.

Man is the terminating link of the animal creation. It is equally evident that he participates the nature of this class of beings, and that he is at the summit of the scale. His points of conformity with the animals beneath him are striking and numerous. Like them, he passes through the stages of growth, maturity, and decline: like them, he perishes as an individual, but perpetuates himself as a species: like them, he has his pains and pleasures, diseases and remedies, wants and the means of supplying them. The first law of nature in both, is that of seeking happiness. In both, this happiness is partly personal, partly social. In both, occasions arise in which the personal and social coincide, and others in which they interfere. Now comes the principal moral difference. In brute animals, wherever the *storge*, or parental and conjugal affection, does not take place, the individual uniformly (a few dubious cases, perhaps, excepted) prefers his own gratification to that of another, or of any number of others: in man, the strength of sympathy, the pleasures of sentiment, the habits of society, and the reciprocal ties and dependencies of various kinds, have so involved the interests of numerous individuals, that happiness cannot be pursued to any extent but as a matter of alliance and conjunction. Hence cases perpetually occur in which a man is induced to resign his immediate and single gratifications for the sake of that common good in which he is a sharer. This is a *law of his nature;* and, considering it as such, it is not of the smallest consequence whether a theorist finally refers it to a benevolent or a selfish principle. Further, he is enabled, by that idea of the connection of cause and effect, and that memory of past and anticipation of future events, which he possesses, if not solely, at least in a degree greatly superior to other animals, to resist the impulse of present appetite and passion, when his own greater good, or that of persons dear to him, requires it. Here, then, is a large provision made in his nature for the attainment of all the personal and social virtues. He will be prudent and temperate in the use of sensual enjoyments, both that he may not exhaust the source, and that the consequences of excess may not overbalance the pleasures. He will be kind and benevolent, compassionate and charitable, because he is so constituted as to sympathise in the happiness and misery of those around him;

because he is a social, and not a solitary being. He will even interest himself in the concerns of large communities, and forego his ease, and hazard his safety, to promote their advantage; because he is capable of personifying the ideas of country and mankind, and identifying himself with the human race; because he is sensible of the exalted pleasure of being admired and beloved when living, and can associate these feelings to his memory after death. If to this fund for useful and generous action be added the capacity of receiving pure and inexhaustible delight from the exertion of intellect, what an idea must be formed of the nature and condition of man, and how fitted must he seem to occupy the elevated rank assigned him in this visible system of things!

But it is also an invariable law of nature, that upon every advantage should be entailed, as it were, an appropriate inconvenience—upon every good should be quartered its evil. As in the tropical climates the same sun that nourishes a luxuriance of the richest vegetation, and provides abundance for all the wants of man, fills the air and earth with noxious insects, and exhales pestilence from the stagnant waters; so the noble powers bestowed upon the human race, and the multiplicity of strong motives perpetually rousing these powers to action, render its individuals more liable to err in the pursuit of their own happiness, and more capable of inflicting mischiefs upon each other. The keen relish for varied gratification stimulates the intemperance of man, and administers food for insatiable cupidity. His love of power, of honour, of fame, involves him in endless rivalries and interferences. Even those attachments which take him in some measure out of self, and engage him in the interests of kindred, party, and country, enlarge the sphere of his contention, and precipitate him against whole masses of fellow men, with whom, in a private capacity, he could not come into contact. Political institutions, and forms of government, which in one view are admirable contrivances for restraining the hurtful passions of mankind, in another, by the creation of a multiplicity of new relations and remote interests, are causes of unthought-of and interminable quarrels. Without experience, how could it be conceived that a hundred thousand human beings could, by any force, be set in array against another hundred thousand, with the mutual purpose of destruction, when the subject of the dispute perhaps concerned not a single person on either side, and even their passions took so little part in their hostility, that the signing of a piece of paper might immediately convert them all into friends and allies? If one swarm of bees engages in battle with another, it is for the possession of the hive and honey; and thus the warlike tribes of men which issued from the great northern hive, were wont to contend for the occupation of more fertile lands in a better climate than their own. But the fruits of victory now belong only to the few, who, sitting quiet at home, direct this chess-play for their amusement or emolument. To such civilised gamesters, however, less than the extermination of an adversary will suffice; and a few bold moves may decide the contest with little comparative loss.

A circumstance which seems most remarkably to violate the analogy between the human and brutal nature, is the amazing difference of perfection attained by different individuals in the former, while those of the latter, in their several species, appear to be nearly upon the same level. Hence it has been inferred, that a very small part of mankind are what their creator intended they should be; and, consequently, that a great future melioration in the mass is to be expected. But does not the nature of a being, capable, indeed, of high intellectual attainments, yet at the same time subjected to numerous corporeal wants and necessities, which are not to be supplied without care and toil, render such a difference unavoidable; and is it not manifestly impossible that the highly cultivated part should ever be more than a small minority? The leisure that they enjoy, and all the advantage of books, instruments, and other things necessary to the pursuit of literature, are at the expense of the majority, whose bodily labours are by so much the more augmented, as a higher degree of cultivation augments the demands of those who can compel their services. Of this consequence some philosophers have been so sensible, that they have condemned not only the refinements of sensual pleasure, but even those mental luxuries which require a large apparatus; and they have looked for the perfection of human nature in that state of simplicity and equality which attends the rude beginnings of society. Though I by no means agree with them in their estimate of the real happiness of man, and think it a timid and narrow policy to acquiesce in imperfection through fear of the effects of a full exertion of the powers bestowed upon us; yet the general fact, that one part of mankind must be depressed proportionally to the exaltation of the other, I regard as indisputable. It is, indeed, a perfectly laughable ignorance in the speculatist who, sitting in his study, with all his conveniences about him, fancies that all the world might devote as much time to mental exercise as he does. Were he to trace the history of his fire and candle, his paper, pen, and ink, he would perhaps be shocked to find how many pairs of hands are employed to favour the work of his head.

We may observe in nature numerous instances in which a provision seems to be made for proceeding much further in the attainment of certain purposes than is actually done. The amazing powers of generation bestowed upon fishes, insects, and the whole vegetable race, are, in great measure, apparently employed to pure loss,—to the production of an abortive progeny, or of one which it is impossible to bring to maturity. But for this seeming waste of effort we can satisfactorily account from the necessity of securing a point so essential to the economy of nature, as the constant renovation of what is subjected to constant destruction. Thus, too, in the self-preservation of the individual, we often see an exertion of faculties, either of acting or enduring, vastly beyond the common calls of life, and which lie latent in the greater part of the species during their whole existence. These examples should perhaps diminish our surprise, that the sublime faculties granted to man so rarely find opportunity for full expansion, and that in whole nations, for many ages, no individual arrives at the intellectual excellence of which he is created capable. It is enough that they are inherent in his nature, ready to be produced when the general condition of the society in which he lives, and his own rank in that society, make it expedient. If a difficulty can be diminished by extending it, we may allege that it presses as much upon the corporeal as the mental nature of man. For how few of the species are there who acquire the bodily powers of athletes, dancers, or posture-masters; or the nobler and more useful talents of artists of every kind? If we conceive it necessary that a state of things should arrive in which all men should be mathematicians, astronomers, and metaphysicians, it seems equally so that they should be all artificers, painters, and musicians.

But the moralist, while he readily gives up the probability of a general attainment of these points of human excellence, will strongly plead the necessity of supposing a future improvement in *virtue;* for the true definition of this quality being such a disposition of mind or course of conduct as promotes happiness, it must, in all places, conditions, and states of society, be essential to the welfare of man. And, indeed, no prospect can be so cheering to the heart of the philanthropist, as that of a period in which mankind, wisely and faithfully employing the powers with which they are endued, and profiting by the lessons of experience, shall steadily pursue their own and the general good, and cease to inflict upon themselves and others those evils which are the most numerous and exquisite of the catalogue. If, however, we consider what are the causes of these moral evils, I fear we shall find little reason to expect their abolition, or even their considerable diminution, while man is the creature we every where find him. It may be said of a high degree of moral, as well as of intellectual, excellence, that it is the result of those favourable circumstances in which a comparatively few only of the species can be placed. The early discipline of a good education, a happy immunity both from the stimulus of urgent wants, and the temptations of power and opulence, leisure for the culture of the heart and understanding, freedom from false principles and bad examples, are advantages which can be obtained only under the shelter as it were of social institutions, to the support of which numerous moral sacrifices must be made by the mass of the community. They who are maintained, protected, and governed, without any efforts of their own, may well afford a greater attention to moral duties than those who do all these offices for them. But it is not from such a select and favoured class that an idea is to be formed of what the human species is capable of becoming.

Let us now imagine an inhabitant of another world making a survey of this, in the spirit of a naturalist and a philosopher. He would discern a beautiful economy of things, in which every single species, besides providing for its own existence, is made subservient to the necessities of another species; so that throughout all nature nothing exists purely for itself, but the interests of one are blended and involved with those of another. By virtue of this economy, however, he would find that sacrifices are perpetually made of the advantage and even the being of individuals, and that life is maintained at the expense of life, and enjoyment procured at the expense of enjoyment, throughout the sentient creation. Moreover, he would perceive, that the operations of inanimate powers, such as the elements of fire, air, and water, the principle of gravitation, and the like, though so beneficial on the whole, are often converted into causes of mischief and destruction. He would therefore conclude, that the general system was an inseparable mixture of good and evil; but he would (or I greatly mistake) discern that the good is intentional and preponderant, the evil contingent and subordinate. He would receive it as a complete proof of a wise and well arranged plan, that, notwithstanding all adverse and destructive processes, every species of being maintains itself in existence, and preserves the rank in the creation it was destined to occupy.

On turning his view upon the most distinguished and interesting figure among animated forms—the human species—he would see moderate powers of body, inspired by an unknown something, which renders them capable of the most wonderful exertions, and every where establishes a complete superiority over the other animal tribes. He would observe this creature agitated by a vast variety of passions and desires, precipitating him into actions, some injurious to his own happiness and that of his fellow creatures, others promoting the felicity of both; he would see him building with one hand, and overthrowing with another, cultivating and desolating, adorning and defacing, caressing and murdering; but upon the whole, he would find no reason to doubt that he also followed the general law of creation, and that his existence was a blessing to him, probably the greater in proportion to the superiority of his faculties. Comparing different tribes and individuals of this species, he would be sensible of a wide scope for improvement, general and particular, and would probably expect, from the ready inter-communication of ideas, that it would soon take place. But a closer view of the mechanism of human societies, and the natural tendencies of things, especially if strengthened by a knowledge of past events, would be too apt to lead him to suspect that there existed insuperable obstacles to an extensive melioration. Taking the human race, however, as he found it, he could scarcely conceive that it had undergone any corruption or deterioration, which rendered it a different agent in the great system of nature from what its Author intended it to be. Such a supposition would only enhance to him any difficulty arising from the inadequate employment of the faculties bestowed upon man; and he would sooner rest satisfied in that universal analogy which shows evil every where mixed with good, defect with excellence.

THOUGHTS ON THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

IN an interesting Memoir of the late Professor Porson, nothing appeared to me more curious and worthy of observation than the manner in which his father habituated him from infancy to the exercise of the faculties of memory and attention, by accustoming him to work all the common rules of arithmetic as far as the extraction of the cube root by the head alone. It is justly remarked, that to this early training he was much indebted for the extraordinary powers he afterwards displayed in storing up knowledge, and applying it to the occasions of that critical investigation in which he so greatly excelled.

There is, in fact, no part of biography so important, with respect to the history of the human mind, as that which points out the external circumstances which have contributed to the formation of moral and intellectual character. It will, indeed, always be matter of doubt in what proportion original conformation, and incidental circumstances, severally operate in this respect, and some reasoners will attribute more to one cause, some to the other. But that both exert a powerful influence cannot be questioned; and as external causes alone are within our direction, it is in the consideration of them that we are to look for practical instruction.

Two characters more different than Richard Porson and Jean Jacques Rousseau can scarcely be conceived, and it is probable that a great part of the difference was original and constitutional; but neither could any two things be more different than the courses of mental training which each underwent. The parents of both were men of parts, in humble life, and were themselves the early teachers of their children. But Porson's father was an unlettered villager, who probably knew nothing of man and his concerns beyond his own narrow circle, and the force of whose mind had been employed upon speculations which had nothing of feeling or fancy attached to them. Rousseau's father, on the contrary, was the citizen of a little republic, full of political intrigue, and in which a taste for general literature was more widely diffused than, perhaps, in any other spot on the globe. The manner in which he opened his son's mind was to read to him till his eighth year all the romances he could procure, and then to go over with him all Plutarch's Lives, interspersing such remarks as might impress him with patriotic ardour and high notions of moral excellence. It is impossible not to recognise in the subsequent life and writings of this singular man the permanent effects of an education thus expressly calculated to make him all feeling and imagination. If we now conceive the boys to have been contemporaries, and to have changed fathers, we shall scarcely be able to set any bounds to our ideas of the alteration in their respective characters. No one will suppose that Porson would have become Rousseau, or Rousseau, Porson; but it is probable that the eloquence and enthusiasm of the one, and the critical investigating spirit of the other, would have been in great measure suppressed, and the native genius of each would have burst out in some new direction.

I confess that I have not much faith in the decisive and indelible effects of single and perhaps unobserved incidents, to which those who adopt the theory of association are apt to ascribe so much in the formation of temper and disposition. I rather impute such effects to the gradual operation of a continued agency, which has time to induce an habitual mode of thinking or feeling, and to convey into the very substance of the mind what is analogous to the nutritious part of food received into the body. Instances are numerous in the records of biography, in which accidental circumstances, operating in this manner during the susceptible period of early youth, have laid the foundation of those irresistible propensities to particular pursuits which have almost always preceded the attainment of distinguished excellence in them. I shall mention a few of these as they occur to my memory.

The puerile fancy of Cowley was nourished by Spenser's *Faery Queen*, which lay in his mother's parlour window, and which he had entirely devoured before he was twelve years old. Its product was a little volume of "Poetical Blossoms," published at the age of fifteen or sixteen.

Pope's early fondness for reading led him to the perusal of Ogilby's *Homer* and Sandy's *Ovid*. He was afterwards, while yet a boy, an occasional visitor of the theatre, and the fermentation of verse and heroism in his mind brought forth an Homeric drama, which he procured to be acted by his school-fellows. He did not, it is true, afterwards write tragedies, but he translated Homer.

The father of Goldoni, who was a physician, having indulged his son when a child with the erection of a little theatre at his house, in which the boy and his companions acted plays, afterwards in vain attempted to bring him up to his own profession, and to that of the law; and he became the most copious writer of comedy in his age.

Richardson, who seems from childhood to have been a formal narrative little man, was early practised in gossip and letter writing by the circumstance of being chosen by three damsels as the confident of their love affairs and the inditer of their epistles. Who does not see that this secretaryship was the immediate parent of *Pamela,* and the remote progenitor of *Clarissa* and *Grandison?*

Gessner, the pastoral poet and landscape painter, we are told, was extremely backward in acquiring the rudiments of learning, till a sagacious tutor took him out into the fields, and gave him lessons in the midst of the striking objects afforded by nature in Switzerland. These so happily impressed him, that he for ever associated literature with an ardent passion for rural scenery and manners, and charmed his countrymen with his creations of the pen and pencil in this walk.

Sir William Jones had the happiness to receive his first education under a mother who was well qualified to cultivate his promising talents. When he asked her questions about any matter of information she would answer, "Read, and you will know;" and by thus habitually connecting reading with the gratification of his curiosity, she inspired him with that insatiable ardour for study which ever distinguished him.

Linnæus was the son of a poor Swedish clergyman, one of whose simple tastes it was to cultivate in his little garden all the kinds of plants which he was able to procure. This garden was the occupation and delight of his son from childhood, and a passion for botany "grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength."

In all these instances, to which many additions might easily be made, it will be found that not a transient impression, but a course of repeated action or sensation, was the instrument by which that lasting taste or disposition was formed which characterised the man. It may be useful to pursue somewhat further this train of speculation.

In each of the two great branches of human character, the *moral* and the *intellectual*, may be discerned the influence both of original conformation, and of secondary or adventitious circumstances; and it is upon just and precise views of the respective operation of these two sets of causes, that all conclusions, practical and speculative, concerning character are to be founded. The records of biography present numerous facts whereon to build such conclusions; and facts alone can be relied upon in an inquiry which, in reality, is a department of natural history.

To begin with moral character—The position that *temper* or *disposition* is a radical quality of mind, never entirely to be changed, but only modified in its agency by superinduced habits, or by principles of conduct, which, while they serve to give it a direction as far as their influence extends, leave it the supreme arbiter of life and manners in other points—will probably receive illustration and proof from the following examples.

Cato the Younger was characterised almost from infancy by a firm unyielding temper, joined with a slow but solid understanding, which rendered indelible, impressions once formed, and made him immutable in his purposes. This disposition, in and untutored an ill-governed mind, might have been mere vicious stubbornness and obstinacy; but the maxims of Roman patriotism and Grecian philosophy elevated it to a moral heroism of which history affords few parallels. It is related, that Popedius Silo, one of the deputies sent to the Italian states to demand their participation in the rights of Roman citizenship, having been entertained as a guest in the house of Livius Drusus, uncle and guardian to Cato and his brother Cæpio, once in a playful manner, requested the two boys to intercede with their relation in his behalf. Cæpio readily promised compliance; but Cato, who had doubtless been nourished in all the lofty sentiments of a Roman, looked in silence at Popedius with an expression of displeasure.—Unable by soft words to overcome his surliness, Popedius carried him to the window, and threatening to throw him out, held him as if ready to let him drop; but the boy bore it without the least indication of fear, or a single conciliatory expression. Popedius had sagacity enough to discern in this scene the future bulwark of his country's rights. At the age of fourteen, being taken to pay his respects to the dictator Sylla, with whom his family was connected, and seeing a number of heads of noble victims carried out from an inner apartment, he asked of his Greek preceptor, Why such a man was suffered to live? "Because, (he replied) Sylla is still more feared than hated." "Give *me*, then, a sword, (said young Cato,) that I may free my country from tyranny;" and this he uttered with so stern and determined an air, that his tutor was obliged to watch him closely, lest he should put his purpose in execution. Here were manifestly the dawnings of that great character which matured and principled by the stoic philosophy, produced the invincible assertor of Roman liberty, and the most upright of patriots. In the earlier ages of the republic it might also have been marked with unfeeling severity; but letters had softened Cato into humanity, and no man displayed more substantial kindness upon adequate occasions. His unsubmitting spirit, indeed, sometimes led him into useless and imprudent opposition; and his strict adherence to the rule of right embarrassed his friends as much as his enemies; but it was not his fault that the times were unfit for him.

John Lilburne, the English republican, was not inferior to Cato in firmness of resolution and unyielding intrepidity. Perhaps there was more of the restless and contentious mixed in his disposition; yet the differences between the two characters may be chiefly ascribed to the difference of their education and situation in life. John was an apprentice in London when he first exhibited his impatience of tyranny by a complaint before the chamberlain against his master for ill usage. He then began to study the divinity of the time, which was all turned to controversial disputation, and he became a zealous puritan, with all the austerity of the sect. The Book of Martyrs inspired him with an enthusiastic fervour for acting and suffering in what he deemed the righteous cause. He was soon called upon to suffer, and no one could go through his trials with a more unsubdued spirit. His stedfast appeals to the laws of his country and the privileges of Englishmen, procured him great popularity with the inferior classes, and the title of Freeborn John. Lilburne passed a life of content against power in every hand in which it was placed, of dispute with all his superiors in command, and of virulent controversy on civil and religious topics. He was a brave soldier, but never found an authority under which he could continue to act. He appears to have been fond of contention for its own sake; yet without doubt there was much of principle in his constant opposition to injustice and oppression, and the event often proved him to be in the right. That a kind of ridicule is attached to his memory, is perhaps chiefly owing to the contemptible nature of many of the disputes in which he was engaged, and the vulgarity of his style and manners.

The philanthropist John Howard (no man ever better deserved that title) was equal to either of the former in firmness of mind, but it was unattended with the litigious propensity of the last, and was accompanied with a singular restlessness that perpetually urged him to some active pursuit. With only an ordinary share of moral principle, this might have rendered him merely a busy man, occupied in gratifying a mutable curiosity with persevering industry; but christianity was to him what stoicism was to Cato, "*Non sibi sed toti genitum se credere mundo*"—a system of practical benevolence, impelling him to sacrifice his repose and hazard his life in promoting the welfare of his fellow creatures. His determined spirit, and his love of action, were modified and directed by this great principle. It rendered him in his peregrinations as superior to the calls of appetite, as Cato was in the deserts of Africa; and enabled him to face the dangers of disease with as much courage as a soldier could display on the day of battle. It overcame even curiosity and the love of knowledge, and fixed his attention to the one great business of benevolence which he had undertaken.

> He keeps his object ever full in sight,
> And that assurance holds him firm and right.
>
> DRYDEN.

In the preceding instances, native resolution was actuated by motives which outweighed the selfish principle, and inspired a course of conduct of which public good was the object. In the class of men who have popularly obtained the denomination of *great*, we shall always meet with the fundamental quality above mentioned, but too frequently under a very different direction. An example or two of this kind may usefully be adduced by way of comparison.

Julius Cæsar, brought up as a young man of rank in a most dissolute metropolis, was, for a time, whirled in the vortex of pleasure, and confined his exertions to exploits of gallantry and the attainments of splendid accomplishments. Yet the firmness with which he resisted the terrible Sylla, who imperiously urged him to divorce his wife, the daughter of Cinna; and the commanding intrepidity he displayed when a captive among pirates;

gave manifest tokens of a character born for distinction in any walk of life which he should finally pursue. The prospects of ambition at length opened on his mind; and meeting with no principle to circumscribe them within the limits of legitimate power, he entered upon that career, which led him by undeviating steps to the subversion of the liberties of his country. The union of indefatigable activity and prompt decision with daring enterprise, gave him a superiority over all his competitors, and ensured success to his plans. There appears to have been in his composition either a native mildness, or an acquired spirit of moderation, which rendered him one of the most clement of conquerors in a civil war; but the baneful effects of uncontrolled power on the temper were beginning to show themselves before he was made a sacrifice to patriotic vengeance.

Intrepidity and resolution have seldom been more conspicuous than in the character of Cromwell. This extraordinary person seems in his youth to have been noted for a turbulent ungovernable disposition, which threw him into a licentious course of life. From this he was reclaimed by an early marriage and admission into respectable society; and he soon began to attach himself to that party in which an appearance, at least, of sanctity was requisite to gain reputation. Nor can it be doubted that his mind, naturally prone to enthusiasm, imbibed a portion of real religious fervour. But his projects for advancement rendered it necessary for him to affect more than he felt; and in a mixture which, remarkable as it may seem, is not uncommon, he combined hypocrisy and cunning with fanaticism. Had not, however, the civil contests of the time terminated in an appeal to the sword, he might have remained only distinguished in the groupe as a busy oppositionist, and a long-winded canter, greatly inferior in talents and accomplishments to the parliamentary leaders. But the vigour and abilities that he displayed in the field gained him the confidence of his party; and being shackled by no principle, he made use of his acquired credit to supplant his competitors, and raise himself to sovereign power. Had this man been originally bred to arms under a settled government, it is highly probable that he would have attained an elevated rank, in which his turbulent spirit might possibly have incited him to embroil affairs for the purpose of further advancement; but the habitual dissimulation and hypocrisy which the peculiar circumstances of the time rendered necessary to his actual progress, might never have formed an essential part of his character.

Inflexibility was the base of the extraordinary character of Charles XII. of Sweden. In his youth he was stubborn and indocile; and having the disadvantage of being born heir to a monarchy, he might have been totally uneducated, had not means been found of working upon that spirit of emulation which was one of his active principles. He was induced to learn Latin by being told that the kings of Denmark and Poland were proficients in that language. He read Quintus Curtius, and from that time the ardour for martial glory seems to have taken possession of his breast. Alexander became his hero and the model for his imitation; but without the splendid qualities of that conqueror, he possessed what he wanted—resolution to resist the allurements of pleasure. When called forth to action by the unjust aggression of his neighbours, he for ever renounced the society of the fair sex and the use of wine, and steeled himself to all the toils and hardships of a military life. His temper, naturally insensible, was rendered more unfeeling by the principles of arbitrary power, which caused the lives and fortunes of his subjects to appear as nothing in his sight, whilst pursuing his romantic schemes of conquest. In all his subsequent adventures, his successes and failures, the same inflexibility, or obstinacy as it might justly be termed, characterised him. He appeared a hero at Narva, and a madman at Bender; but he was radically the same in both—inaccessible to fear, to pity, to all the common feelings of human nature. He would excellently have filled the part of Talus the Iron Man in Spenser; but to the lasting injury of his country, and the disturbance of Europe, fortune had made him the directing head as well as the executing arm. He was as ready to fight for a punctilio as for a kingdom, and nothing but a bullet could stop his career.

Virgil, in his third Georgic, describing the tokens by which a generous nature may be discerned in the young steed, mentions the impulse to take the lead of his fellows, and to be the first in every daring adventure:

> Primus et ire viam, et fluvios tentare minaces
> Audet, et ignoto sese committere ponti.

The same spirit is said to show itself in young hounds of an excellent breed, and in various other animals of superior races.

The human species is not devoid of individuals born with similar indications of nobleness of nature—with a strong aspiration after excellence, and readiness to undergo any toils and hardships in pursuit of it. Happy is the parent or instructor to whose share one of these choice productions has fallen; for with this temper of mind there is no point of attainment within the reach of the pupil's faculties that may not be expected. It is, however, a disposition that requires peculiar delicacy and attention in the management: for when suffered to run untrained, or misdirected in its objects, it may easily be the source of more mischief than benefit, both to its owner and to society. Its almost inseparable companion is an ardent thirst of praise and admiration; and these are so often bestowed by the world without judgment or consideration, that unless a true estimate of things be first established in the youth's own mind, this emotion, so useful as a stimulative, may be exercised upon the most frivolous or improper objects. Another frequent attendant upon this disposition is the ambition of grasping at a great number of attainments at the same time, in order to dazzle beholders by unexpected combinations of excellence; through the indulgence of which desire, real excellence in any is often precluded, and fine abilities are seen to blossom without bringing any fruit to maturity. For these reasons, there is no class of minds in which so much may be usefully done by discipline and instruction towards the formation of character, as that which is our present subject—a fact which will be rendered apparent by those biographical examples both of excellence and defect which will occupy the remaining part of this paper.

The most splendid instance of the passion for excelling, presented by history, is that of Alexander the Great. This prince, to whom fortune gave the means ready prepared of rising to the summit of martial fame, would probably have distinguished himself in any condition. The tamer of Bucephalus and the pupil of Aristotle could scarcely have been a common man. It is in some respects unfortunate for mankind that there should be a class of human beings, so much elevated above the rest of the species, that they can scarcely find any object on which to exercise the desire of pre-eminence, at the same time innocent, and sufficiently dignified. Thus Alexander refused to enter his name at the Olympic games unless he could have kings for competitors; and the great game of contending for the empire of the world was the only one that could satisfy his noble emulation. Even in this he seems rather to have been moved by the passion of accomplishing difficult and extraordinary tasks, than by the vulgar desire of aggrandisement; and the conqueror in him was subordinate to the hero. In the pursuit of this object he shewed himself, at least in the early part of his career, superior to the allurements of ease and luxury, and capable of confronting every kind of toil and danger; and thus has established a claim to that genuine ardour for excelling, which cannot be gratified without the consciousness of personal merits. Sovereigns have such easy methods of indulging the wish for distinction, that no force of mind is required for the attempt. An Egyptian king had only to employ all his subjects in the idle work of erecting a loftier pyramid than any of his predecessors had done, to render his name eternally illustrious among a people of slaves. In more enlightened countries, the building of sumptuous palaces, and the formation of grand establishments for the arts and sciences, though costing nothing to the monarch but an exertion of his will, shall perpetuate his memory with the most magnificent eulogies. Thus Louis XIV. by nature cold and inactive, by education uninformed and illiterate, having in the pride of self-consequence said to himself—In whatever point other kings have been great, I will be so too—employed the stock of wealth, power, and talent which he inherited with his crown, in such a manner as to become the most conspicuous name in Europe during half a century, though without a quality which could have distinguished him from the mass, if born in a humble condition.

To return from the spurious to the genuine exemplifications of the class in question.—One of the most memorable examples afforded by history of the passion for excelling, joined with talents and industry, and many advantages of nature and fortune, is that of Alcibiades. This celebrated Athenian displayed from childhood the resolution which is essential to greatness of character, as we learn from the following remarkable incident: Being at play with other boys in the street, a loaded wagon came up just as the game required him to run across: he called to the driver to stop, and finding that he paid no regard to his mandate, he threw himself upon the ground before the wheel, and bade the man drive on if he chose. Many were the frolics of his youth, in all of which he exhibited a daring and imperious temper, and a resolution to distinguish himself in every thing he undertook. He was an attentive and favourite pupil of Socrates, and at the same time the most noted debauchee in Athens. He was an eloquent speaker, a valiant commander, and a deep politician, whilst he was the first racer at the Olympic games, and dazzled all Greece by his profuse magnificence. He was every thing in extremes, and nothing moderately. In Sparta he was admired as a pattern of abstemiousness and hardiness, and in Persia he surpassed a satrap in luxury. Every where he was an object of wonder, but no where long of esteem; and for want of fixed principles and steadiness of conduct he passed his life in perpetual change, and at length perished miserably; a signal example of the abuse of great talents, with powers of mind capable of bringing them into full exertion, but mis-directed in their application.

Various parallels might be found to the character of Alcibiades, the splendour of which seems to have made it an object of emulation to men of parts and of loose principles. As far as the passion for exciting admiration by extraordinary actions and accomplishments was its prominent feature, that of the Duke of Wharton nearly resembled it. Of this nobleman, Pope, in his finely drawn portrait (*Moral Ess.* Ep. 1.) says, that the "ruling passion was the lust of praise:" and that

> Born with whate'er could win it from the wise,
> Women and fools * must like him, or he dies;
> Tho' wond'ring senates hung on all he spoke,
> The club must hail him master of the joke, &c.

In Wharton this propensity seems to have been of a lower quality than in Alcibiades, and attended with inferior powers of exertion. Accordingly, the Athenian never sunk into the contempt which attended the Englishman, but in the lowest ebb of his fortune retained consequence enough to make him feared. Wharton ended "flagitious but not great."

When the love of praise preponderates the desire of excelling, or when the latter is occupied with unworthy objects, the character is chiefly marked by childish vanity and incongruity. Even the detestable Nero displayed a great passion for being admired in the arts of poetry, music, and acting; and not entirely satisfied with the hired or compelled acclamations of his servile audiences, he actually took great pains, and underwent many privations, to qualify himself for appearing before the refined connoisseurs of Greece. He was much more affected by being called, in the manifesto of one who had taken up arms against him, "a sorry musician," than by all the reproaches for his cruelty and mis-government; and amidst the terrors of his approaching fate, frequently repeated, "What an artist I perish!"

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* A most injurious combination, characteristic of the splenetic misogynist who made it!

The emperor Julian was a singularly compounded character, the basis of which was a passion for becoming conspicuous; and though in some points it displayed itself in puerile vanity, in others it inspired exertions worthy of his high station. Early a convert to heathen philosophy, he adopted with fanatical zeal all the tenets of pagan theology, and pried with futile curiosity into all its mysteries; but at the same time he practised all those high lessons of self-command, temperance, and contempt of pomp and splendour, which are infinitely more difficult to a philosopher on the throne, than to one in the schools. Vain of his learning and talents, and imbued with the spirit of literary equality, he descended to act the haranguer, the disputant, and the satirist, and sunk the dignity of the emperor in the loquacity of the sophist. Yet he aimed, not unsuccessfully, at the glory of a legislator; and, more unhappily and inconsistently, at that of a conqueror; aspiring to be at the same time an Antoninus and an Alexander. After emulating the greatest warriors in courage, activity, and the endurance of hardship of every kind, he lost his life and brought the empire into extreme danger, by a rash attack upon a foe from whom, even in better times, the Roman arms had reaped little but disgrace. He was, in fact, an enthusiast clad in a philosopher's mantle.

The ambition to excel has rarely appeared with more lustre than in the two famous orators of Greece and Rome, Demosthenes and Cicero; for in both it was accompanied with a steadiness of pursuit, and a limitation to important objects, which raised them to high distinction in their several states, and has perpetuated their names among those of the greatest characters of antiquity.

In Demosthenes the passion was more confined, embracing only the wish of attaining the first rank among the political orators of his country; and numerous are the anecdotes recorded of his indefatigable efforts to overcome the natural defects under which he laboured, and to surpass all the most eloquent speakers of his time. It was, indeed, no common object of emulation to become the man,

> quem mirabantur Athenæ
> Torrentem, et pleni moderantem fræna theatri.
> JUVENAL.

or, in the words of Milton, who

> Wielded at will that fierce democraty,
> Shook th' arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece,
> To Macedon, and Artaxerxes' throne. *Par. Reg.*

And although his love of praise may be thought to have stooped to a vulgar gratification when he was delighted to hear one market woman say to another—That is the famous Demosthenes!—yet those women were Athenians; and he knew at the same time that the Macedonian court by its hatred bore an equal testimony to his reputation. Though not superior to corruption, he possessed a fund of real patriotism, and the liberty of his country expired with him

Cicero was so much favoured by nature in genius and disposition, that while yet a school boy he became the pride and wonder of his young companions. The facility, however, with which he obtained youthful distinction did not slacken his efforts in pursuit of mature excellence; and when he had determined upon the forum as his chief scene of action, there was no study connected with the theory and practice of perfect oratory in which he did not engage with the greatest ardour. His ideas of this perfection were more extended than those of Demosthenes, as his topics of public speaking were more varied. He had likewise a peculiar relish for philosophical discussion; and having, during the course of his education, furnished his mind from the copious stores of Grecian literature in this branch of research, he was enabled, after the subversion of the Roman constitution had set him aside from professional duties, to distinguish himself as the greatest writer on morals and philosophy in the Latin language. How much that thirst of praise which stimulated him to these extraordinary exertions was the foible of this admirable person, is too well known; but though weakly covetous of fame, his excellent sense and liberal principles led him to seek it in the paths of true glory.

Sir William Jones appears to have been inspired with as pure and honourable a passion for excelling, as almost any individual upon record. He was not less distinguished among the companions of his early studies than Cicero himself; and his masters might confidently predict that he would turn out no common man. Perhaps he had something of the splendid fault so frequently accompanying this cast of character, the ambition of aiming at too many acquisitions at once; but how few have really equalled him in the extent of his knowledge and the brilliancy of his performances! It is, indeed, a kind of presumption to set limits to the capacities of a mind endued with great natural powers, and excited to action by a strong and unremitting impulse. Many examples prove that much more may be effected by generous enterprise than timid indolence would conceive possible; and although we may sometimes wish that ardour were spontaneously tempered by discretion, yet we should be reluctant to damp it by discouragement or censure.

It is scarcely necessary to prolong this paper by instances of the passion in question displayed by the votaries of particular arts or professions, since wherever superior excellence is found, that may be presumed to have preceded. Those arts which address themselves in a peculiar manner to public admiration exhibit the emulative spirit in a high degree, and the history of painting and sculpture affords remarkable examples of its agency. But when thus confined to one object, and to that with which every flattering prospect in life is connected, it perhaps does not so clearly designate the general disposition, as when operating more excursively. It cannot, however, be doubted, that when the pursuit of excellence has occupied the whole man during life, as in the case of Michael Angelo, the same temper would have shown itself under any circumstances. It is, indeed, a disposition so ready to burst forth into display, that it scarcely admits of concealment; and as Dryden beautifully says of Mrs. Killegrew, whom he represents as fired with the passion for universal excellence, the "bright soul breaks out on every side."

ON SELF-BIOGRAPHERS.

AS it must be admitted that men know more of their own story than any other persons can know of them, an obvious advantage arises from the disclosures they may choose to make to the public, as being more exact and particular than can be given by any other pen. This is especially the case with respect to those early periods of life which precede entrance on the open stage of the world; and also to a number of minute domestic facts which, however trifling in appearance, are often of fundamental consequence in the elucidation of character. As far, then, as it is interesting to contemplate the history of any human being from its very origin, and to mark the rise and progress of those qualities, moral and intellectual, by which he is distinguished from every other individual, the information communicated by himself must be peculiarly valuable. Who, for example, but Montaigne himself was likely to have acquainted us with that singular mode of education by which he was *talked* into a knowledge of the learned languages, without ever committing to memory the common rules of grammar; and was initiated into that course of promiscuous and excursive reading, which, while it stored his mind with a vast mass of fact and opinion, and freed him from the shackles of the schools, also rendered him that lax and irregular thinker which we find him in his Essays? What friend of Franklin's knew him so early and intimately as to have been able to relate those circumstances relative to the manner in which he passed his childhood and youth, which, in his own narrative, so instructively point out the steps of his progress to that character of practical wisdom, public and private, for which he was so conspicuous? What other person but Rousseau himself was acquainted with the impressions his mind underwent in childhood, from that course of novel reading, followed by political lectures on Plutarch's Lives, by which his father administered fuel to his imagination, and at the same time inculcated the high sentiments of republican equality?

But it is chiefly in this disclosure of unknown facts, and the secret workings of the soul to which no other mortal is conscious, that the peculiar advantage of autobiography consists; for nothing is more rare than that degree of self-knowledge which enables a person, even if wishing to be sincere, to draw a true portraiture of himself. Though a man who internally feels all his own foibles ought to be more sensible of them than a bystander, who observes them only in their occasional operation, yet such is the blinding power of the self-love which is rooted in every bosom, that they are often rendered either wholly inconspicuous to their owners, or appear with such softenings and modifications that they are scarcely recognised in their proper character. Hence what promises in the outset to be a frank confession of a fault, is sometimes so diluted and neutralised in the progress, that its effect on the mind of an unwary reader is almost obliterated. A remarkable example of this juggle of self love it afforded by a passage of Lord Clarendon's Life of himself, where he is speaking in the third person of his own temper and habits. "He indulged his palate *very much*, and even took *some delight* in eating and drinking well, but without *any approach* to luxury; and in truth rather *discoursed* like an epicurean, than *was one*." Here the language is so ludicrously inconsistent, that the noble writer must have laboured under an extraordinary degree of mental obscuration not to have perceived it. In another passage the same want of self-knowledge is displayed, but without such a contradiction in terms. "He was in his nature inclined to pride and passion, and to a humour between wrangling and disputing, very troublesome; which good company in a short time so reformed and mastered, that no man was more affable and courteous," &c. Now the fact was, that a stately, unbending, ungracious behaviour, always adhered to this eminent person, and was one cause why in his prosperity his enemies were much more numerous than his friends.

Another manner in which self-importance gives a bias to autobiographers is in leading them to imagine that there is something very peculiar and extraordinary in their own characters, and in the incidents of their lives. It is flattering to a man's vanity to indulge the conception that he is formed in a different mould from other mortals, and is marked out by events as one destined to act a part appropriate to himself on the theatre of the world. This humour is happily exposed by Shakespear in the person of Glendower:—

> ——————At my nativity
> The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes, &c.

And after much rodomontage of this kind, he adds,

> These signs have marked me extraordinary,
> And all the courses of my life do shew
> I am not in the roll of common men.

The "Religio Medici" of Sir Thomas Browne is filled with similar assertions of the writer's singularities in mind and disposition, as well as with extravagant pretentions to almost universal knowledge, at the same time that he disclaims the remotest disposition to pride or self-conceit. The celebrated Lord Herbert of Cherbury has exhibited in his Memoirs a propensity of the same kind. Persons in whom pious feelings predominate, are led by this infirmity to arrogate the special protection of Providence, and to find miraculous interpositions in their favour in the common escapes from difficulty or danger.

For this tendency, however, a reader will soon know how to make due allowance: and the little ebullitions of self-consequence appearing in such forms are rather amusing than deceptive, and indeed exhibit a feature of real portraiture; but there are causes of misrepresentation in autobiography, the effects of which are less obvious to detection. In order to be put sufficiently on our guard against these sources of error, it is necessary to consider the motives that usually influence persons to become the narrators of their own history.

The desire of being favourably known to the world must be regarded as nearly universal in self-biographers; for although there is a kind of blabbing loquacity in some men which urges them to write, as well as to talk, of themselves, solely for the gratification they find in it, yet, as this disposition is usually accompanied with a degree of vanity, a secret purpose of showing themselves off in the fairest colouring will scarcely fail to become an additional motive. Hence, in all the confessions that are made before the public with so much apparent frankness, although foibles, defects, and even some vices are readily acknowledged, yet care is taken to suppress every thing that would indicate meanness, dishonesty, selfishness, cowardice, and all those propensities which debase a character in universal estimation. And if the writer occasionally discloses facts which would injure him in the estimation of an exact moralist, it is because, not being such himself, he is not aware of the consequence. I recollect no instance of a man's betraying his own secrets at the hazard of appearing both contemptible and odious, so extraordinary as that of the Confessions of Rousseau; but his cast of mind was so singular, and indeed in some points approach so nearly to insanity, that his conduct can scarcely be cited as an exception to the preceding remark. It is, moreover, evident that in this very work (which, too, was posthumous) his object was to inculcate a very exalted opinion of himself in the most essential points; and he probably thought that the amelioration of his character by philosophy obliterated all the stains of his early life. In the same manner, fanatical religionists are ready to charge themselves with having been the worst of sinners previously to that regeneration which has made them saints.

That remarkable character, Cardan, was also one who, with high boasts of himself, has confessed to faults of temper and conduct, which cannot fail to depreciate him in the estimation of every sober reader of his life: but it is apparent that his moral sense was by no means delicate; for when he mentions his unhappy son, who was executed for the murder of his wife, he represents him as an injured sufferer, rather than as a victim to justice. In like manner we find that vain glorious artist, Benvenuto Cellini, in his curious memoirs, mentioning his acts of violence and brutal revenge more as matter of boast, than of penitence. In professed *Apologies* no one would look for much sincerity of confession; yet the loose unabashed character of Colley Cibber has rendered his biography of himself, under that title, a tolerably resembling portrait of the coxcomb and libertine; and certain female *apologists,* whose reputation was past retrieving, have not scrupled to record their slips with reasonable fidelity, for they risked nothing in exposing themselves, and thereby gained an opportunity of exposing others. The Marshal de Bassompierre, another autobiographer, is at no pains to conceal his deep and successful gaming, and the unbounded license of his amours, because, though devout enough in the Roman Catholic form, he felt no compunction for these peccadilloes, which could not hurt his character as a gentleman. Polonius, in Hamlet, when he directs his servant to throw some slander upon his son Laertes, by way of fishing out his secrets from his companions, only cautions him to

——————breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty,
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood.

These observations may suffice to show that open confession of some faults by no means implies that others are not concealed; and that although we may safely admit all the ill a man speaks of himself, we must not conclude that one who knew him thoroughly could not bring to light a great deal more. And on the whole, it may be taken for granted that the portraits of persons drawn by their own hands will, if likenesses, at least be flattering ones; and that the narratives of their lives, if composed by themselves, will, indeed, be rendered interesting by circumstances which could not be communicated by others; but, at the same time, by the suppression of some facts, and the misrepresentation of others, will mislead the reader who has no means of checking them by different relations. If we possessed no other account of Margaret of Valois, the divorced queen of Henry IV., and one of the most licentious women in France, than her own memoirs, she might pass for a model of chastity.

Of the works of this class, we have many written by statesmen, generals, and persons employed in important public transactions, one object of whom may be generally concluded to have been the giving a favourable view of the part they themselves acted on the scene; for it would be too much to expect of human nature that a public man should sit down to make a statement of his own errors, purely for the benefit of his successors. Such narratives, therefore, though often highly valuable for the information they convey, as being derived from sources inaccessible to other writers, must always be read with a degree of scepticism. We know that Cæsar, notwithstanding the air of unpretending simplicity in his Commentaries, was charged in his own time with having passed over in silence various instances of failure and defeat. If Cicero's different narratives of the acts of his consulate had been transmitted to posterity, though they might have acquainted us with some circumstances of which we are now ignorant, yet we may be sure that he who did not scruple to request his friend Lucceius to violate the faith of history by throwing a lustre on his deeds beyond their desert, would not have been more scrupulous in sacrificing truth to vanity with his own pen. Vanity, indeed, is a failing which, when strongly marked, may justly impair our reliance upon the narrator of his own actions, how estimable soever in other points. Such a person will at least exaggerate, and give a disproportionate consequence to the transactions in which he was concerned.

It was said of the brave but gasconading Montluc, that he was one "*qui multa fecit, plura scripsit*"—who did much, but bragged of more. The vanity and self-importance conspicuous in Bishop Burnet contributed much to weaken the authority of his *History of his own Times*; and though his reputation for veracity appears in the main to have been gaining ground, it cannot be doubted that he over-rated his own share in many of the affairs of which he is the relator. It was said of Burnet's work, that it might be justly styled "The importance of a Man to himself"—a title well merited by perhaps the generality of auto-biographers.

Such are the advantages and defects of this class of biographical writings. They are commonly entertaining and interesting; they afford materials for the history of the human mind which can scarcely be obtained from other sources, and are especially valuable for the means they present of tracing the original formation of characters: at the same time they are almost universally partial in the statement of facts; frequently mislead by arrogating to their subjects a greater degree of merit and consequence than belongs to them; and perhaps never pourtray with that truth of resemblance which would be given by a sagacious and impartial observer. It is worth while to read all the most noted of these works, but always with a limited and suspended confidence.

ON THE ATTACHMENT

TO MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.

EVERY one who has visited Scotland, or who has read travels into that country, must have been struck with the great popularity attached to the memory of Queen Mary, displayed in the association of her name with all the places of her temporary residence, and with the scenes of her transactions; so that a stranger to Scottish history might suppose that the glory and felicity of her reign had eclipsed those of every other in that country, and had thrown all its other sovereigns into oblivion. Yet the fact is so much the reverse, that scarcely ever has a reign been more unfortunate, or a sovereign less entitled to the gratitude of subjects. Setting aside all the controverted points relative to the misconduct of this unhappy princess, it cannot be disputed, that, being educated in France among her maternal ancestry, the Guises, she from childhood fixed all her affections exclusively upon that country—that on her marriage with the Dauphin she was prevailed upon secretly to sign away that independence of which the Scottish nation has always been so jealous, and to make over her hereditary realm, in failure of issue, as a gift to the crown of France—that she came to Scotland with a rooted aversion to the country and its inhabitants—that she was a bigoted adherent to a religion which the majority of her subjects had discarded—that in contempt of the native nobility, and in defiance of decorum, she gave all her confidence (if nothing more) to an insolent Italian upstart—and that after scenes which involved the Scottish name in disgrace throughout Europe, and which implied, if not the blackest guilt, at least the greatest indelicacy, self-will, and indiscretion on her part, she was the cause of a civil war, which terminated in her perpetual exile from her country. I well know that much may be said in extenuation of most of these instances of misconduct, and that Mary may deserve more to be pitied than to be detested ; but to select her as the object of fond attachment, and consecrate her memory as the English do that of Elizabeth, and the French of Henry IV. is surely unworthy of the acknowledged good sense of the Scotch nation.

It is not difficult, however, to assign causes for this national partiality ; and three especially may be pointed out as having operated upon differents sets of people.

The patriots of Scotland, warm in the recollection of its struggles for independence against England, forget every thing in Mary but the unjust treatment she met with from her English rival, and regard her as the victim of a system of policy directed to the subjugation of their country. They pardon her subserviency to France, from the consideration, that to its connection with that kingdom, Scotland was indebted for its chief support against the usurpations of England. It is enough to excite their zeal in her favour, that she was a Scottish queen unjustly put to death by an English one; and all her faults are sunk in her political martyrdom. The motive to this class, of which the excess alone can be blamed, is *nationality*.

Another set of Mary's advocates are chiefly instigated by partiality for the house of Stuart, a feeling once very predominant in Scotland, and widely diffused in the sister country by the spirit of jacobitism. To all these, the Queen of Scots is the revered relic of an ancient royal house, and the progenitor of that favourite race of sovereigns which long held the sceptre of the combined kingdoms. The resistance to her government, first raised by the Scottish calvinists, whose principles of state partook of republicanism, appears to them in the light of a criminal rebellion, and they espouse her cause as the sacred cause of monarchy. The zeal of this class may be denominated *party*.

The third, and perhaps most numerous, tribe of Mary's admirers are the *sentimentalists*. These form to their imagination a figure of exquisite beauty, adorned with every amiable quality and elegant accomplishment, and fondly sympathise with all its distresses, as those of a fair and innocent sufferer, inflicted by a jealous rival. The scene of her execution, so pathetically painted by two historians little favourable to her memory, melts them to compassion, and they cannot think that one who died so heroically could have lived guiltily. The tender, the romantic, the poetical, in both kingdoms indifferently, indulge this sensibility whenever the charming Queen of Scots is recalled to mind; and due allowance, certainly, ought to be made for feelings springing from so pure a source. We learn from history, that the *interesting* queen Joan of Naples, who also had the misfortune of being charged with the murder of her husband, was the object of similar emotions. At the same time, it must not be thought extraordinary if those who have been accustomed to form their estimate of characters with a little more moral consideration, should be backward in participating of this amiable enthusiasm. In fact, few things are more prejudicial to morality than indulgence to gross faults and crimes, on account of qualifications which imply little estimable in the owners, and are useless to those with whom they are connected. The grand inquiry relative to persons in every station of life ought to be, how they have acquitted themselves in the first line of their duty. For failures here, no inferior merits can compensate.

I cannot conclude without a serious admonition to the respectable patriots of Scotland no longer to countenance a weak and childish attachment, which is injurious to the memory of their other sovereigns, and inconsistent with the sobriety and manliness of the national character.

ON THE IMITATIVE PRINCIPLE.

EDUCATION is the process by which a creature is conducted from the weak and imperfect condition of new existence, to a state of maturity. It takes place, therefore, in some degree with respect to the whole animal creation, which, by the constitution of nature, has this progress to pass through. In the inferior classes, however, it consists in mere corporeal change, effected by the sure operation of natural causes, without any adventitious aid. The young of many animals are dropped into the midst of all they want, furnished with faculties enabling them spontaneously to make a proper use of what is provided for their nutriment. These might be called the favourites of nature, were not the extent of their enjoyments as limited as their procurement is easy. The young of the more perfect animals are not qualified so soon to live independently. Strength and cunning are requisite to many, in order to secure their subsistence and protect them from their enemies. A task, therefore, devolves upon their parents, which consists of two parts; the providing of food and shelter for their bodies, and the instructing of them in those arts of life which they will hereafter have occasion to practise. With regard to the latter, however, nature seems chiefly to rely upon that *principle of imitation* which she has implanted in the young of all animals, and which prompts them to make attempts at doing all they see done, till by repeated trials they attain the power of doing the like. This principle alone probably suffices for the education of animals in general, though in some instances we discern efforts in the parent to point and direct it. Thus, the parent bird is not content with flying in the sight of her young ones, but takes manifest pains in instructing and encouraging them to fly.

Among the less civilised tribes of mankind, the imitative principle, with a slight degree of attention in directing it, constitutes almost the whole of education. The young savage, as soon as he is able to use his limbs, accompanies his father to the chase or the fishery, makes his little bow and arrows, sets his traps for small birds, in short, does in miniature all that he sees done by his elders, in copying whose actions he places his utmost ambition. If active and ingenious by nature, he acquires every thing almost of his own accord, and gives no trouble to an instructor. He learns the use of language by imitation, selects his food and chooses his pastimes by imitation, adopts ceremonial observances and superstitions by imitation, practises the arts of life by imitation; and, in fine, squares his whole conduct according to that principle. Some more curious points of knowledge or skill, some secrets which long experience has taught, may be communicated to him by his parents in the way of positive instruction; and constraint may be occasionally used to force him to apply to a difficult or laborious task. But, in general, this is unnecessary. The arts requisite in savage life are simple, and skill in them is to be obtained by repeated practice alone. Their obvious utility, and the honour gained by excelling in them, are motives sufficient to stimulate the emulation of the young; and what they imitate, they soon equal. With modes and habits of life, sentiments and opinions are acquired, and thus the new generation becomes an exact copy of the old. This is what may be called *natural education.* Its effects, as far as they go, are certain; and there is no more doubt that the young of the human species thus brought up will resemble their parents, than that the young of any other animal will do so. This education prevails in its utmost perfection among the savage Americans; and it is curious to remark how, through its means, with scarcely any artificial instruction, and with the least possible restraint on freedom of action, the same end has been attained of forming a warlike character, with all its love of glory, fear of shame, endurance of hardship, and contempt of pain and death, which was effected by the severe and unnatural rigours of the Spartan discipline.

Even in civilised societies a greater share of education is entrusted to simple imitation than is, perhaps, generally conceived. The common exercise of the limbs, the practice of numerous little arts, the use of language itself, that noble distinction of man from inferior animals, are all imbibed without direct instruction.

Manners, customs, the decencies of life, and even sentiments of morality and religion, are in great measure derived from the propensity to imitate and adopt whatever is habitually heard and seen. Great part of the wisdom of the wise and of the virtue of the good is thus insensibly acquired: indeed, so much is done by it, that it may rather be made a question what else is requisite in education, than what is the efficacy of this. And surely if it can be shown that what is most valuable to the man can be obtained at no other expense than that of setting proper examples in the way of the child, for his spontaneous imitation, such a training will be thought preferable to the elaborate and uncertain process of artificial instruction.

It cannot escape observation, that in the list of things which young people are usually set to learn, some may be termed *essential,* and others only *subordinate;* and though all persons will not agree in the particulars which are to be referred to each of these classes, yet it will be generally allowed that the *essential* are such as exert the greatest influence upon after life. To secure these, though at the expense of the others, ought to be the care of every wise parent; and the first step to it is, that parents themselves should resign the vanity of *showing off* their children by forced acquisitions which are only admired in them as children, and are thrown by and forgotten on the approach to maturity. It is very much on their account that children are secluded from family society, and banished to boarding-schools, where they live in severe restraint or rude familiarity, estranged from all domestic endearments, and deprived of the means of knowing any thing of that world which they are shortly to enter. The most agreeable view of human society is that of an assemblage of human beings of every age, sex, and condition, acting in their mutual relations to each other, mingling in serious and sportive occupations, and taking their several parts in the grand drama of life. In such a society it is that minds are formed, that knowledge and manners make their silent progress, and that the *imitative principle* gradually leads on the young to the character and acquirements of maturity. It is an assortment of individuals made by the hand of nature, in which all have duties to perform, pleasures to receive, and improvements to make. Banish a part of what composes *family,* and the whole system is defective. It should comprehend not only the father and mother, the servants, and the child in the cradle, but the rising youth in every successive gradation. From such a complete band, as it were, proceeds the full harmony of the charities of life. The children of middle age look down upon the infants with tender affection, and up to the elder branches with a softened respect; thus fostering emotions which are to make them amiable and estimable in future life. When the well grown boy employs himself in teaching, conducting, and protecting his younger brothers and sisters, and the womanly girl assists her mother in the cares of the nursery, what a fund of skill and patience are they acquiring for the most important duties of men and women!

It may be made a general remark, that when any one of the divisions of mankind is separated from the rest, and forms a society apart, a generic character is produced by virtue of the imitative principle, widely deviating from that which it would have maintained while mingled with the mass. Thus the monastic societies, male and female, have composed a race of beings, in their manners and sentiments scarcely preserving any similarity with those of the world they have renounced. Those governments which have been desirous of training military men to the highest pitch of ferocity, have been careful to prevent them from mixing in the scenes of civil life. Soldiers long confined to a garrison, and sailors to a ship, are apt totally to forget their relation to the community at large, and to become assimilated to a band of robbers in their den. The Zaporavian Cossacs are so sensible of the effects of this seclusion, that in their community, which is an association for blood and plunder, they admit no women or children. I would not say any thing unnecessarily harsh of institutions among ourselves which many approve; but I might be permitted to ask, what are those boasted virtues of hardy resolution, unshaken fidelity to their companions, steady combination against authority, and defiance of punishment and censure, which are acquired at our public schools, but qualities resembling those of the detached societies above mentioned, and directly hostile to the principles which produce the welfare of society in general?

With respect to the schools for the other sex, I cannot suppose them nurseries of dispositions like these, nor am I a believer in the stories circulated, chiefly among the licentious, concering the prevalence of gross violations of decency in them. I am convinced, that in all the reputable seminaries of this class the higher morals are guarded with due vigilance. But I would ask those who are best acquainted with them, whether the society of a number of equals under rigorous restraint, without the softening of domestic pleasures and parental endearments, do not frequently tend to fret and sour the temper, and give scope to mean and spiteful passions, to envy, detraction, and tale bearing, which render unlovely the most amiable part of the creation?

What is the result of all these observations? That since the imitative principle has such a powerful operation upon the future character, it is of the highest importance that proper objects should be presented to it during the early years of life—and that due advantage should be taken of its influence, to inculcate those lessons which by no other means can be so easily and efficaciously impressed upon the youthful mind. *Domestic education* alone affords the opportunity of applying this principle in the fullest and most beneficial manner; and, therefore, in a general view, deserves the preference to other modes.

There are, however, various exceptions to this preference of a home education, which demand attention. The first to be mentioned is a most serious one: it is, that in the present state of manners a child frequently cannot draw his examples from a more improper source than his father's house. And if such an awful consideration be unable to produce a change in the parental economy, doubtless its weight is decisive. Let the child rather be exiled to the remotest parts of the earth than stay to date his ruin from *home*. Nor, when the danger is manifest, would I think of concealing or palliating it by proposing the expedients of separate apartments, a distinct establishment, or other safeguards, which must all prove unavailing where the current of dissolute manners runs strong. One remark, however, I will venture to make. Where the principal hazard is supposed to arise from the idea a child of family and fortune brought up at home will acquire of his own consequence, by means of the deference and submission he will experience from servants and dependants, *that* will not be effectually obviated at a public school. The pretended equality in those schools is rather imaginary than real. There, not less than at home, are parasites and panders, vigilant to flatter his pride and minister to his inclinations. When boys of inferior fortune are sent to public seminaries for the avowed purpose of ingratiating themselves with the sons of persons of rank, can it be supposed that the latter will be left ignorant of their importance, and uncorrupted by its effects? The generosity of spirit usually attributed to youth educated at those schools is, I fear, of no genuine kind; and the mercenary character of the age has in no instance more disgusted me, than in the sentiments I have discovered in some of these tiros, who, in speaking of the reputation and proficiency of some of their fellow scholars, have dwelt with peculiar complacency on the advantages they were likely to derive from them in the pursuit of pecuniary emolument. Fair fame, literary pleasures, the gratification of parents and friends, were ideas that appeared quite foreign to their conceptions; and gain seemed as much their leading object, as if simple and compound interest, rather than Cicero and Horace, had been the study for their years.

Another exception to domestic education arises from the necessity of acquiring certain objects of instruction which cannot be attained in the requisite degree at home, even with the assistance of a day-school, which I consider as no deviation from the domestic plan. These objects are chiefly, in the male sex, classical literature in its highest form; in the female, the accomplishments of polite life in an equal style of perfection. Of the existence of this *necessity* no general judgment can be formed. It is an individual question in each particular case, and only to be determined by the views of the parent as to the future destination of the child. Doubtless there are desirable situations in this country which can scarcely be obtained without a high classical reputation, and, it may be added, without those connections, and that habit of pushing and elbowing through a crowd of competitors, which are the usual acquisitions of a public school. If these are to be had *at any rate*, the price must be paid for them; and it may be prudentially right to sacrifice every thing—except (some will say) morals—to such an object. As I am now speaking of the earlier periods of education, it is needless to point out, as further exceptions, those professional studies which are to be sought in colleges and universities. At the time when they commence, the season approaches in which domestic life must of course be renounced, and new scenes be entered upon. The *imitative principle*, however, ought still to be kept in sight, for its operation is scarcely less powerful than at an earlier age. It now points to *fashion*; and if some seminaries are characterised by the fashion of idleness and dissipation, and others by that of industry and sobriety, a parent who has his son's best interest in view, will not hesitate about the preference. To *imi-*

tation, likewise, may be referred the peculiarities of sect and party which now begin to be strongly marked and permanently fixed; and they who are concerned in supporting such distinctions must take care to place suitable models before the imitative youth.

Of those necessities which oblige females in certain ranks of life to pursue accomplishments by a sacrifice of the qualifications requisite to make them good wives and mothers, I confess myself an inadequate judge; nor shall I venture to say any thing concerning the accomplishments themselves, and the best mode of acquiring them. There is one female accomplishment, however, on which I shall take the liberty to make a few remarks, and this is a *talent for conversation.* I believe I shall not err in placing it at the head of all attainments with respect to its attractive powers. Other excellencies inspire occasional admiration, but this rivets the attention. It fascinates even more, at least more generally, than beauty; nor is it fitted for the throng and circle alone, but exerts its influence in the private party, and constitutes the charm of domestic society. That it is so little cultivated among us may seem surprising; but there are no masters to teach it, nor do wealth and rank afford peculiar facilities for acquiring it. In fact, as far as it is a qualification to be learned, and not the gift of nature, next to the essential requisite of a well furnished mind, the habit of holding free and mixed conversation must be the most efficacious aid. But where is this advantage to be obtained? Certainly not within the walls of a boarding school, where the trivial chatter of children among one another, only interrupted by the chilling presence of despotic governesses, must exclude every possible attempt at rational and animated converse. Domestic life, when it is what it ought to be, is the only female school for this attainment. Where parents have the ability to lead, and the sense to encourage, proper conversation, and where a due mixture of well educated visitors of both sexes and all ages infuses life and variety into the social circle, *there* is the theatre where this delightful accomplishment receives its birth and perfection.

It is unnecessary to specify other exceptions to domestic education, arising from circumstances which depreciate the value of home, though not of an immoral nature; such are vulgarity, ignorance, awkward manners, singularities, and the like. In these cases, it is *not* the object of wise parents to make the children similar to themselves, and therefore the imitative principle must have other models to work after. If these cannot be provided but by means of a school, the expedient must be submitted to as the least evil. It may likewise be proper sometimes to check the force of domestic imitation, even when upon the whole well directed, by temporary absences and changes of scene, lest so close a family likeness be caught as to render the young mere copies of the old, and *mannerists* in character. But this may be left to the suggestions of good sense without further remark; and I now close a discussion which the importance of the subject has carried beyond its intended limits.

HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF POISONINGS.

EVERY one who is conversant with history must recollect numerous instances in which the death of eminent persons has been attributed to poison. In some periods, particularly, this notion has been so prevalent, that scarcely one is to be met with in a whole line of sovereigns who has been supposed to have died from the consequences of mere natural disease. Besides this vague supposition, several of the more noted cases of poisoning have been admitted into the number of unquestioned historical facts, although attended with circumstances which a little reflection would show to be highly improbable. I shall not here inquire whether the propensity to this belief be owing to a natural malignity in mankind, a love of wonder and mystery, or any other innate principle; it is sufficient that it is one of the sources of erroneous opinion, to induce a lover of truth to submit it to impartial discussion.

It appears to me, that in judging of this matter certain rules or canons may be laid down, which might abridge the process of inquiry in each particular case, or even supersede such an examination as, from the distance of time, and want of authentic testimony, cannot now be satisfactorily instituted. The first of these that I shall propose is the following: Great crimes are to be regarded as among the rarer occurrences of human life; whenever, therefore, an event can with probability be accounted for without their aid, it is unphilosophical to suppose their existence.

I know not how far this proposition will be generally allowed; but for my own part, being convinced that there is more good, both moral and physical, than evil in the world, and that even in bad characters crimes abhorrent to human nature are not committed without a degree of repugnance, I cannot give an easy credit to such an imputation as that of poisoning, unless I perceive a very powerful motive inciting to the deed. Even adepts in villainy have held the maxim that crime is too precious a thing to be lavished, and have therefore reserved it for important occasions. In fact, they have been desirous of doing without it, if possible; both to save themselves the secret pain of guilt, which the most hardened can seldom entirely subdue, and to escape the odium and danger of a detection. Certain characters in history are so blackened with infamy, that every charge against them is apt to appear probable, and examination is thought superfluous. But many of those persons were as prudent as they were wicked; and the actions of a Tiberius or a Borgia require adequate motives, as much as those of the most virtuous of mankind. In several of these cases of imputed poison, a known constitutional disease, or old age, would soon innocently have effected all that crime could propose to do. When almost the whole royal family of France was swept away in the latter years of Louis XIV., men of understanding saw the cause in the enfeebled progeny of luxury, rather than in the chemical laboratory of Philip of Orleans.

Another canon is, that the supposition of poison is not to be adopted in order to account for deaths, the circumstances of which are totally different from the known effects of poisonous substances.

In common opinion, poison, like magic or any other mysterious power, is conceived capable of acting in any mode required. It can kill instantly, or at ten years distance—by the ordinary vehicle of food and drink, or by the extraordinary conveyance of perfumes, vapours, and topical applications—with known and customary symptoms, or with such as are new and unaccountable. But no physician or naturalist can admit such gratuitous assumptions. He will, in the first place, remark that all the poisonous substances which modern researches (so much more accurate than ancient) have detected, are referable to certain classes, distinguished by precise and definite modes of action. Thus, the corrosive, the drastic, the narcotic poisons, in all their various degrees of strength, are as well known by their sensible operation, as the classes of medicines with which they are connected, and in which, indeed, they are for the most part comprehended. I do not mean to assert that it is impossible there should be in nature deleterious substances whose effects are not reducible to the above mentioned classes; but I would maintain it to be highly improbable that any such, in those parts of the world which have been the chief theatres of historical events, should have escaped the inquiries of naturalists and chemists. Further, it will appear that some of the imputed consequences of poison are absolutely irreconcileable to the laws of the animal economy. Thus, though it be possible that a noxious substance received into the stomach shall not only excite immediate disturbances, but shall lastingly injure the constitution; yet that, conformably to some stories, it should lodge weeks and months in the intestinal canal perfectly harmless, and reserve all its mischievous effects to some remote period, precisely determined by the giver, is, I conceive, an impossibility. Again—that any poison can be so volatilised and concentrated as to kill by the odour communicated to a letter or a pair of gloves—or that any exists sufficiently strong and penetrable to prove mortal by infecting the caul of a wig, or by fruit touched by an envenomed knife—will scarcely be credited by a reflecting mind; for although the miasms of certain diseases are destructive in forms as subtle as these, it is inconceivable that any human beings could prepare a venom so exquisite without being themselves destroyed by it.

A very suspicious circumstance with respect to many stories of poisoning is the alleged efficacy of counter poisons. The doctrine relative to these substances—that a previous use of them will fortify the body against the operation of any poisons that may be afterwards administered—is contrary to every fact respecting such things as we know to be really poisonous. One of the most famous compositions of the antidote class, that contrived for Mithridates by his physician Archigenes, has come down to our times; and it is certain that a person might take large doses of it daily for his whole life without being secured from the baneful effects of any poison, except, perhaps, opium, which is contained in the composition itself.

A number of the antidotes in highest repute have been the most inert substances in nature, chosen from their rarity alone, or from some fanciful and superstitious notion connected with them, and such as could have no possible efficacy in rendering a deleterious drug harmless. Indeed, the whole *antidotary*, which was formerly a copious division in books of materia medica, is expunged from modern works of that class.

When, therefore, of two persons supposed to have taken poison, one is alleged to have escaped by means of a counter-poison, we may pretty safely conclude that neither of them was in reality in danger from that cause.

Poisoning and magical arts are common combinations in criminal charges. Indeed, the term *veneficium* in Latin signifies equally poisoning and sorcery. We know the latter to have been a fictitious crime, the creation of superstition and credulity; and it is highly probable that in those instances the poisoning was in like manner a false imputation, the forgery of malignity and calumny. It is true, the charge of sorcery or witchcraft has sometimes been well founded; that is, practices of that kind have really been employed, in the belief that they would produce the mischiefs intended; and persons capable of such criminality would probably feel no repugnance at any other nefarious practices; but, on the other hand, if they confided in their magical rites, they would think an additional mode of effecting their wicked purposes superfluous.

As another rule in judging of stories of poisoning, it might, perhaps, be required in support of them to show by what means the poison could be administered; or, at least, to answer the objection often arising from the apparent difficulty of such administration. Kings and princes are usually surrounded with officers in such a situation of responsibility, or so much attached to their persons by interest, that it would be no easy matter either to engage them to concur in such a design, or for any one of them to execute it without the hazard of immediate detection. Voltaire may perhaps be thought to have displayed an outrageous degree of scepticism in questioning the offer made by the physician of king Pyrrhus to the Roman consuls, of poisoning his master, on the ground that the confidential medical attendant upon an opulent monarch could not expect a reward from the magistrates of a poor republic, adequate to the risk and certain loss he would incur by the attempt: I have no doubt, however, that physicians have often been falsely accused of this crime. They have, indeed, the easiest opportunities of administering a fatal dose; but they are the most closely watched; and in arbitrary courts it is a service of danger enough to give even an approved medicine of powerful operation.

It is very seldom that in historical relations of poisonings proof has been given of the fact from examination of the dead body. Appearances, indeed, are often mentioned as denoting poison, but these are sometimes of so marvellous a kind as to throw doubt upon the whole story; such is that of the heart remaining entire on the funeral pyre when the rest of the body was consumed. In fact, there is no change in the dead body induced by poison which is not also a consequence of natural disease, except large and recent erosions of the stomach and bowels; yet many positive judgments have been hazarded where this circumstance was wanting, and where nothing was seen but what was entirely equivocal. The detection of the remains of some poisonous substance in the intestinal canal is a demonstrative proof of the fact, which seems scarcely ever to have been attempted in cases recorded by historians.

If the preceding rules and observations are well founded, we shall be warranted in regarding with doubt, and admitting with caution, many of the most remarkable instances in which the death of eminent persons has been attributed to poison, especially where strong prejudices have prevailed against the supposed perpetrators, and the crime has been imputed as a thing of course, without any evidence of fact. The narrations may justly be more suspected when they relate to an ignorant and superstitious age or country, which have always most abounded in tales of wonder of every kind.

I am very far from supposing that human wickedness has not often, both in public and private life, employed this instrument in effecting its detestable purposes; but something is gained to the cause of benevolence whenever we are able to exonerate our fellow creatures from any odious charge; and historical truth is at all events an interesting object of inquiry. I shall now proceed to apply the principles I have attempted to establish, in an examination of some noted instances in which credit has been given to the imputation of poisoning.

Germanicus Cæsar, the nephew and adopted son of the emperor Tiberius, is, by some writers, positively asserted to have been poisoned by Piso, prefect of Syria, at the instigation of Tiberius. Suetonius and Tacitus relate the circumstances of his death, and both mention the suspicion of poison, the former seeming to give credit to it, the latter not. From their accounts, particularly that of Tacitus, which is the fullest, it appears, that Germanicus, being sent by his uncle to command in the east, was followed by Piso, a man of violent temper, and hostile to the young prince; and there is good reason to suppose that Tiberius, in conformity with the maxims of his dark and crafty policy, had purposely chosen a person of that character to check and control his too popular nephew. Germanicus, after visiting various countries, returning from Egypt to Antioch, fell sick there, and lingering some time between apparent amendment and relapse, at length died. As he was the great favourite of the Roman people, his death excited universal commisseration, which his friends took every means to augment; and suspicions of foul practices were soon raised against Piso, which were at length brought to judicial examination before the senate. The emperor seems to have acted with great fairness and propriety on the occasion, suffering the accusation to take its free course, yet endeavouring to moderate the violence and prejudice of the public mind. The charges against Piso were various; but that respecting the poison was supported by the following evidence alone. The act was asserted to have been committed at a banquet, given by Germanicus himself, in which Piso sat next to him, who was imagined to have poisoned his food by touching it with infected hands—a supposition than which one more improbable and even absurd has scarcely ever been made in a similar case! The dead body, when exposed on the forum of Antioch, is said by Suetonius to have exhibited livid spots, with foam at the mouth; and a very extraordinary circumstance is related, namely, that the heart remained unconsumed on the funeral pyre; a fact which the philosophy of the day regarded as decisive of poison; though, indeed, Pliny asserts it also to occur in those who died of the *morbus cardiacus.* It is further asserted, that a famous female poisoner, an intimate of Plancina, the wife of Piso, on being sent for from the province to Rome, died suddenly at Brundusium, and that poison was found tied up in a knot of her hair. As no signs of violent death were discovered in her body, it seems to have been imagined that the power of the poison penetrated through her skull into her brain. Such weak and ridiculous arguments are surely more calculated to excite disbelief than conviction.

One thing which appeared on the trial, though a proof of the bad intentions of the enemies of Germanicus, yet, according to my principles, is rather an argument against the poisoning. This was, that about the house in which he lodged, certain leaden images, relics of human bodies, and verses of incantation were found, by which his foes evidently hoped to render his disease mortal. If they were conscious of having administered poison, these magical practices might have been spared.

On the whole, though Piso, despairing to survive the popular odium against him, and probably conscious of unwarrantable conduct towards the prince, put an end to his own life in prison, yet it appears to me almost certain, that the death of Germanicus was owing to natural disease, aggravated, perhaps, by alarm and vexation; and in no respect to poison.

One of the most famous stories in the annals of poisoning is that of Pope Alexander VI. and his son Cæsar Borgia, of whom the first is said to have been killed, and the second thrown into a dangerous illness, by poison taken through mistake, which they had themselves prepared for others. The characters of these monsters in the human shape will certainly render credible any *useful* crime which comes within the compass of the most consummate villainy; but at the same time, this just prejudice against them may easily become a cause of error in particular cases. The story is related with great diversity of circumstance by different authors; but taking that given by Tomasi, in his life of Cæsar Borgia, as apparently the most accurate, we shall probably find reason to doubt whether poison had any concern in the event. The simple narrative of what is known to have happened is the following.

Pope Alexander having made a promotion of nine new cardinals, invited them and some of the old ones to an entertainment given at the villa of a cardinal near the Vatican. He and his son went to the place about the cool of the evening. It was the 2d of August, and the weather extremely hot. The pope called for a draught of wine to quench his thirst, and his son followed his example. The guests arriving soon after, they sat down to supper; when the pope was suddenly taken ill, fainted away, and was carried out senseless. His son was presently seized in the same manner, and was also carried home. The pope recovered his senses after a time, but fell into a violent fever. He was blooded, and other medicines were employed; but his strength gradually failing, he died on the eighth day.* His son had a long and severe illness, but at length, through the strength of his constitution, recovered. So far we are guided by acknowledged fact. The secret part of the story relates, that some bottles of wine, drugged with a white powder like sugar, the usual poison employed by these miscreants, were sent from the pope's cellar to the villa, with private orders to the butler to serve it to such of the guests alone as should be pointed out to him. The head butler being by chance absent when Alexander called for wine before supper, the under butler, knowing nothing of the contrivance, or thinking this marked wine the most precious, served it to the pope and his son. These circumstances are neither in themselves very probable, nor does it appear how, if true, they should come to be publicly known. It is not likely that a man so politic as pope Alexander should, at the time he had formed great projects, for the execution of which it was necessary to gain as many friends as possible, commit a crime which could not fail to be strongly suspected, and to raise the utmost odium against him. That fancy and fiction were busy on the occasion, appears from a marvellous tale related by Tomasi, that the pope, who had constantly borne about him the holy sacrament in a gold box (an astrologer having told him that it would preserve his life from all dangers,) discovered on coming to the villa that he had left it at home, and sent in all haste for it, but had swallowed the fatal draught before the messenger returned. This messenger, too, who was a cardinal, is said to have seen in his holiness's chamber a vision, representing a dead pope extended on a catafalc. Every judicious inquirer knows how much a mixture of incredible matter tends to discredit the other circumstances of a narration. But in my opinion the strongest ground of unbelief in this story is, that the death may be accounted for another way, and that the incidents of the disease do not correspond with the supposition of poison. In the unwholesome climate of Rome, the sudden cooling of the body at the close of a hot day by a large draught of cold liquor, is surely a very probable cause of an acute disease: and it appears, both from the express words of the writer, and from the treatment, that this disease was fever. The supposed poison, resembling sugar, was doubtless a preparation of arsenic; but its effects are not to excite fever, nor would bleeding be thought of as a remedy. If it were possible that any death of Alexander VI. should *not* be attributed to poison, the circumstances of this would seem as little suspicious as any mode in which he could die. It is true, the concomitant illness of his son renders the fact more singular; but as the same natural cause operated on both, it is reasonable to suppose that the effects would be similar.*

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* The pope's chamberlain, Burchard, says, that he was attacked by a fever on the 12th, was let blood on the 16th, when the disorder appeared to become a tertian, and that he died on the 18th. The difference of date is probably owing to a different reckoning of style.

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* P. S. Since this paper was written, I find from Mr. Roscoe's *Life of Pope Leo X.*, that Muratori has produced many authorities to refute the notion that Alexander VI. died of poison. The note from Burchard is transcribed from that valuable work.

A WORD FOR PHILOSOPHY.

UNFORTUNATE Philosophy! not only to have retained the enmity of all her old foes, the tyrants and deceivers of mankind; but to have incurred the reproaches of many who in better days were well pleased to be regarded as her friends and coadjutors! Perhaps, however, the prejudice conceived against her is beginning to subside; at least, an inquiry how far the imputations under which she has laboured have been merited, may at this time hope for a patient hearing.

Philosophy has been accused of contributing to the subversion of every thing sacred and venerable among men, of vilifying authority, insulting dignities, unsettling established customs and opinions, and substituting her own crudities and fallacies to the results of long experience. I have no doubt that her real influence has been greatly exaggerated, and that the bad passions of mankind have been the true causes of the deplorable evils which the world has lately witnessed: but admitting that Philosophy has had her share in the work of destruction, let us calmly consider what were the things against which her batteries were erected.

Politics and religion, the two master springs of human affairs, have both been touched by Philosophy, and, it must be acknowledged, with a free hand. She has been guilty, too, of what many seem to regard as an unpardonable offence—resorting to *first principles* in order to justify her attacks upon existing systems, and lay a foundation for proposed improvements. Thus, in the science of politics (to begin with that department) she has boldly assumed that men come into the world with *rights*—that the maintenance of these rights ought to be the great object of social institutions—that government was intended for the good of the whole, not the emolument of the few—that legitimate authority can have no other basis than general consent, for that force can never constitute right—that civil distinctions, originating from the agreement of society, always remain within the determination of society—and that laws, in order to be just, must bear equally upon all.

These principles have doubtless borne a hostile aspect towards the greater part of existing governments, which have supported themselves upon maxims so much the reverse; but has Philosophy urged the demolition of all such governments? Certainly not, unless she is identified with Fanaticism. It has been her invariable method first to recommend to the usurpers of undue authority to repair their wrongs by gradual concessions; and secondly, to the sufferers under tyranny, to state their grievances in a quiet way, and patiently, though firmly, to expect redress. This she has done as the decided friend of *peace;* for Philosophy (and Philosophy alone) has been incessantly employed in lifting up her voice against *war*, that monstrous aggregate of all the evils, natural and moral, that conspire against human happiness. The works of all the writers, ancient and modern, who have merited the title of philosophers, may be confidently appealed to for their strenuous endeavours to correct the false opinions of men with respect to the glory of warriors and conquerors, and to inculcate the superior claims to admiration and gratitude arising from the successful culture of the beneficent arts.

Had, then, the dictates of Philosophy been equally listened to by the governors and governed, reforms might have been effected by mutual agreement to the advantage of both, and a progress have been made towards that *melioration* of the state of mankind, which a philanthropist can never cease to have in view amidst all his disappointments. That such expectations have failed through the predominance of the selfish principle, combined with the impetuous and ungovernable character of a particular nation, is not the fault of Philosophy. She held up a torch to point out the safest path to a necessary reformation, but incendiaries snatched it from her for the purposes of mischief. It is acknowledged that some of the evil proceeded from the fanaticism of her honest but deluded votaries; but much more from those who disclaimed all connection with her. The most sanguinary tyrant of the French revolution was notoriously the foe to all mental cultivation, and obliterated the precepts of philosophy in the blood of its professors. And no one can suspect the man who now aims at uniting all Europe in the fetters of a military despotism, of an inclination to promote liberal discussions on the rights of man and the foundation of government. In point of fact, it appears that the sole European power that steadily resists the present tendency to an universal barbarism of civil polity, is that which is most enlightened by free investigation, and in which alone Philosophy at this time possesses a pen and a tongue.*

Whith respect, therefore, to the political system of the world, Philosophy (I mean of that kind which was chiefly prevalent in the latter half of the eighteenth century) may stand acquitted of any thing inimical to the true interest of mankind; and whatever improvements took place in the administration of the continental governments of Europe during that period may fairly be ascribed to her influence. She promoted the enfranchisement of slaves and vassals, the relief of the lower orders from arbitrary and burthensome requisitions, the liberation of internal commerce from impolitic restrictions, the encouragement of every species of useful industry, the melioration of laws, the abolition of cruel punishments and of judicial torture, and, above all, religious toleration—which leads me to the second point, namely, the conduct of Philosophy with respect to religion.

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* This is said not with regard to all the acts of its occasional administrations, but to that *public voice* which, through the medium of a free press, pronounces upon the principles and conduct, as well of its own government, as of those of other nations.

Here, again, it is proper to begin with inquiring what it was that Philosophy actually opposed under the appellation of religion; for nothing can be more unfair than to draw a picture of religion as it has existed only in a comparatively few *philosophical* minds, and then to display it as the object against which Philosophy has aimed her shafts. A system of faith, the sole essentials of which should be a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being of infinite perfections, the moral governor and judge of mankind, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, would, I am persuaded, command the respect of every genuine philanthropist, who would rejoice in such a powerful support to morality, and such a consolation under the unavoidable evils of life, and prize it the more for the sanction of revelation. But where has national religion appeared under this simple aspect? Certainly not in those countries in which philosophers have been its adversaries.

There cannot be a more copious source of error than to confound under a common name, on account of an agreement in certain particulars, things in their nature essentially different. To instance in the different sects which bear the general title of christian—though all referring to the same primary authority, it is scarcely possible to conceive of greater variations than subsist among them, both with relation to each other, and to the doctrines of their common founder. Accuracy, therefore, requires that in speaking of them they should be specifically denominated, and not be grouped under a generical appellative. Thus it is right to say, *the religion of Rome, the religion of Luther, the religion of Calvin,* and the like; for *the religion of Christ,* will convey but a very inadequate idea of their several characters and tenets. Let us then see what that *Roman religion* was which peculiarly excited the enmity of what is called the French school of philosophy.

It was a system which, in the first place, demanded the renunciation of all right of private judgment, and subjected the religious opinions and practices of all the world to the determination of a foreign priest—which took from men the direction of their own consciences, and put it into the hands of a *cast,* detached in all countries from their fellow subjects, and universally connected by peculiar claims and interests—which uniformly discouraged all inquiries and discussions tending, however remotely, to invalidate its own authority, and exacted implicit submission in all points on which it had thought fit to decide—which taught doctrines the most irreconcileable to reason and common sense, and enjoined observances the most trifling, degrading, and burthensome. It was a system, moreover, radically hostile to every other, spurning all community or accommodation, annexing extravagant ideas of merit to proselytism, and, therefore, when allied to power, infallibly leading to persecution: a system, the influence of which was traced in lines of blood through every page of modern history. Was it then no just object to the friends of reason and humanity to loosen the hold of such a religion upon the minds of men? Was it not a necessary preliminary to every attempt for introducing substantial improvements in the countries where it prevailed; and if, in the contest with a mass of opinion so powerfully supported, some things were necessarily endangered which were worth preserving, was not the prize adequate to the hazard?

A consistent protestant cannot, certainly, dispute these conclusions; but he may blame philosophers for not fairly examining christianity at the source, and adopting it in such a form as shall approve itself to a rational inquirer. Before he does this, however, he must be prepared to admit that an inquiry conducted upon such a principle justifies itself, whatever be the system in which it settles. He must renounce all anathematising denunciations; disclaim any preference due to a particular system because it is that of the state; and disavow any right of annexing penalties and privations to non-conformity to a predominant faith. Unless he agrees to these preliminaries, he is in effect no more a friend to free inquiry than the Romanist; and when he urges examination, it is only upon the tacit condition that its result should be conversion to his own opinions. The philosopher who has thrown off the authority of a pope and council is not likely to yield to that of Luther or Calvin, a convocation or a synod.

To conclude—Philosophy, understood in its proper sense of "the love of wisdom," or of truth (which is the same thing,) is the only principle to be relied on, not only for meliorating the state of the world, but for preventing a relapse to barbarism. If *she* be excluded from all guidance of human affairs, in whose hands shall it be placed?—in those of Avarice, of Ambition, of

Bigotry? She may have had her moments of delirium, but she is essentially the votary of Reason, and possesses within herself the power of correcting her own errors. Policy, if *she* be not called in as a counsellor, degenerates into craft; and Religion, without her direction, into superstition. They who are afraid of her searching spirit, must be conscious of something that will not bear the light of investigation. They are foes to the truth because "the truth is not in them."

ON CANT.

Canto quæ solitus. VIRG.

THE motto prefixed may serve as a kind of definition of my subject; for *cant* is, in reality, an *accustomed formula* of words employed on certain occasions—the *chant* or cry adopted by parties, sects or professions, repeated from habit or imitation, without any other design in the speaker than that of saying what has been usual in similar circumstances. The beggar in the street, who addresses passengers with "Heaven bless your Honour! Health and prosperity to you," &c. cannot be supposed to take any real interest in the welfare of those on whom he bestows his benedictions: he only uses the cant of his trade, and does not expect that it should be taken for more than it is worth. The same is the case with other canters. They employ habitual forms of speech, through a sort of *bienséance*, or regard to decorum, which the inexperienced may, indeed, if they please, take for earnest, but which no one conversant with the world considers as such.

Cant, therefore, is different from hypocrisy, though, perhaps, originating from it, and though hypocrisy generally implies a cant. In the use of cant there is, doubtless, somewhat of an intention to appear in a favourable light to those to whom it is addressed; but this scarcely amounts to a serious purpose of deception, and in some instances is totally free from it. Thus, when in the cant of politeness a man calls himself the devoted humble servant of another, he has no idea of being understood according to the literal sense of these words; he only wishes to be regarded as a well bred man. Real hypocrisy seldom confines itself to cant. On the contrary, an artful hypocrite will studiously avoid that phraseology which common use has rendered unmeaning, and will perhaps seek for credit by affecting a blunt disregard of the ordinary forms of civility.

The variety of cants is as great as that of the different conditions and callings of men. Some, however, stand pre-eminent on account of the frequency and solemnity with which they are brought before the public. A brief notice of these, with their several characteristics, will form the subject of the present paper.

Political cant is one of the most noted and prominent species; and notwithstanding the daily proofs of its inanity, it still exerts no small influence over the minds of the credulous and ignorant. Each party in a state has its own appropriate cant; and states employ a cant in their transactions with each other, which is regarded as common property. The public good is a common place equally belonging to all these cants, though variously modified according to circumstances and situations. The monarch laments the necessity of laying additional burdens upon his dear subjects, but the public good imperiously demands such sacrifices, which, however, he hopes, will not be of long duration: in the mean time he is resolved in his own mind not to abandon any scheme of ambition or cupidity in which he is engaged, whatever his dear subjects may suffer. These patriotic sentiments are re-echoed in addresses from the people, expressive of the highest confidence in the wisdom and benevolence of the royal breast, though perhaps at the same time associations are forming for effecting a compulsory change of measures. In these cases the language on each side passes with the experienced only as words of course, and no surprise is excited on finding not the least correspondence in actions.

The cant of party delights to dwell on general terms. Thus the watch word with one is the *constitution,* with the other *reform,* each knowing that by interpretation any thing or nothing can be made of either of these words. A very common cant of the party in power is to express a confident hope of unanimity, although they may be conscious that they have acquired their stations by fomenting as much as possible the spirit of division. A general election is the period at which, in this country, cant is most triumphant, filling the columns of every newspaper, and the walls of every empty house. Its basis is the shibboleth of each party, combined with the personal protestations of the individual candidate. Thus, one in great letters parades his *independence;* another, his attachment to *king and constitution;* a third, his zeal for the *protestant religion;* while all agree in proffering the most active and disinterested services to their worthy constituents. In many of these cases, the mockery of profession is so gross, that one might suppose the writers had adopted the line of Horace,

> Virginibus puerisque canto.

But the most dignified display of political cant is in the manifestos and memorials issued from belligerent courts. The most comprehensive philanthropy, the strictest adherence to good faith and the principles of public justice, and the most laudable spirit of moderation are assumed by all in turn, who avow no other wish than to stop the effusion of blood and restore the blessings of peace to mankind. The late Catherine of Russia was the most conspicuous canter of her time, and was distinguished for the benevolence of her sentiments, and her frequent pious appeals to heaven for the sincerity of her declarations. At present the emperor Napoleon seems to have taken her place, who, good man! would live in perfect peace and quiet, had he not the misfortune of being surrounded with quarrelsome neighbours. It must, however be acknowledged, that he is not the only imperial or royal proficient in this way.

A particular species of the cant of sovereigns is that of prefacing all their severe and tyrannical acts with self-applied epithets of justice and humanity. Thus, when the patriot Patkul was so cruelly sacrificed to the vengeance of Charles XII. of Sweden, an officer read the sentence in the following terms: "It is hereby made known to be the express order of his majesty, our *most merciful* sovereign, that this man, who is a traitor to his country, be broken upon the wheel and quartered," &c. "What mercy!" exclaimed the poor criminal. In like manner, those theologians who maintain that the great majority of mankind were created for the deliberate purpose of being consigned to everlasting torments, usually couple their horrid doctrine with solemn assertions of the infinite goodness of the Creator. The humane court of Inquisition is remarkable for a cant of this kind, and it never submits a culprit to the torture without expressing the tenderest concern for his temporal and eternal welfare.

The *cant of religion* has, if possible, played a greater part on the theatre of the world than that of politics; indeed, with a large proportion of mankind, religion has always been nothing more than a cant. This may be safely predicated of all those who, while they have it continually in their mouths, are never swayed by its precepts in any action of their lives in which their worldly interest is concerned. No sect has a right to reproach another on this head: they are all

> Et cantare pares, et respondere parati.

If powerful establishments seem on one hand to have less motive for canting than their weaker rivals, as being less dependent on public opinion; on the other, the consciousness of exciting envy by their opulence and high pretentions operates to inspire them with the cant of humility and moderation. The haughtiest priest that the world ever saw assumed the title of "the servant of the servants of God," at a time when he expected that kings and emperors should kiss his toe and hold his stirrup. In countries where the civil authority has so far prevailed over the ecclesiastical as to enforce a political toleration of different religions, it is curious to remark how the predominant sect has accommodated a cant to its situation. "God forbid that they should think of forcing men's consciences, or denying to any of their brethren the right of private judgment!" All who dissent from them are to be sure, in the wrong, and their blindness and perversity are to be lamented; but they disclaim all methods of bringing back the stray sheep into the fold, except those of lenity and persuasion. Meantime they do not hesitate to hold up the separatists to the hatred and reproach of their fellow subjects as guilty of the heinous sin of schism; and they strenuously support every unjust and impolitic restriction which ancient prejudice has imposed upon them. Such a church boasts of being *tolerant,* that is, of *enduring* what it cannot prevent. It may surely be affirmed that toleration in this sense is a mere cant word.

Religious cant displays itself in nothing more than in the practice of calling in Providence on all occasions. I am sufficiently aware that a real belief of providential interferences in cases of importance has pervaded all faiths, nor do I mean to censure the pious application of it, whatever may be my opinion of the justness of such application. But when Te Deum is ordered to be sung by both parties after a dubious battle, manifestly for the purpose of raising the spirits of a desponding people; or when the most trivial incidents are construed into proofs of the divine favour by an itinerant fanatic; who does not recognise the cant of hypocrisy? In the time of Cromwell, when the *language* of piety was that of every department in the state, we may be well assured that in many cases it was nothing more than a cant. No where did it prevail more than in the army. A commander, who from good intelligence had marched a troop of horse to surprise the enemy's quarters, in his despatches pretended to have had an answer to his prayers instigating him to the attempt. A council of war always began business with seeking the Lord for direction, while the general had in his pocket the plan of operations which he had concerted with his confidential officers. The Scotch preachers who compelled old Leven to quit his strong post at Dunbar in the confidence of a victory promised to their prayers, were honest enthusiasts; but Cromwell, when he exclaimed, at the enemy's approach, "The Lord has delivered them into our hands," well knew that he had long been employing all his artifice to bring them to this resolution.

Moral cant, at least till lately, was become more fashionable in this country than religious cant; and to this head I fear must be referred much of the pure and refined sentiment with which the public are treated on various occasions. Thus, the solemn and pathetic lectures on morality which are delivered at the bar in trials of crim. con., or for other flagrant violations of the laws of virtue, can scarcely avoid this designation, when it is known that a prior fee would have secured all the speaker's eloquence to the opposite party. I dare not affirm that the zeal manifested in the senate against corruption and public abuses is a cant; although, when we find the same orators when in place entirely forgetting their former language, and defending the very enormities against which they had so loudly declaimed, we must conclude either that some extraordinary process of conviction has suddenly taken place in their minds, or that they were merely before reciting a part in the drama of opposition. The *cant of sentimentality*, which is a kind of sickly and overstrained morality, may be mentioned under this head. Its most copious source is in plays and novels. Sterne was one of those who dealt most largely in this commodity and brought it into fashion. He had a crowd of imitators, who, as usual, exaggerated their original, and carried the affectation of fine feeling to the borders of burlesque. On the stage the comedies termed sentimental gave the tone, which is still followed by our modern dramatists, but with the addition of caricature, and a most unnatural combination of qualities, so that nothing is now more common among the dramatis personæ than generous sharpers and benevolent banditti. The public kindly applauds all the cant put into the mouths of these worthies, while the authors laugh and fill their pockets.

Of other cants, that of *authorship* is not one of the least conspicuous. A versifier, who with infinite pains has strung together a parcel of rhymes, which, after every preliminary of oblique puffing, he gives to the public, affects to regard his performances as mere trifles, composed for his private amusement, and without the most distant view to fame. "Nos hæc novimus esse nihil." "His indulgent friends have been pleased to think them worthy of the light, otherwise he should have condemned them to merited obscurity. Some pieces, indeed, had already got into print without his knowledge, and his principal object is, to give in a more correct form what he could not recall."

Even Pope was not above this kind of cant. Though more a poet by profession than most of the versifying tribe, one of his favourite topics in his letters, as Dr. Johnson observes, is an affected disparagement of his own poetry. He writes, he says, "when he has just nothing else to do." He constantly pretends the utmost insensibility to censure and criticism, and yet composed the Dunciad. The same indifference is affected at the present day by many, who are in agonies on opening a review. As to the cant of pretending to write for the public good, since it has been assumed by every compiler who works by the sheet with the aid of paste and scissars, creditable authors have scarcely ventured to use it.

Criticism itself has its cant, of which one of the most provoking instances to a poor condemned author is the affected exclamation of hardship and misery on the part of the critic, in being obliged to drudge through the wretched stuff that every month obtrudes upon the public, though without such stuff our periodical censors would not have an existence. The royal pronoun *we*, the fiction of a board of greybeards sitting in solemn judgment round a table, and the assumed dignity of an office, frequently the self-creation of conceit and inexperience, are other examples of the cant belonging to the critical trade.

There is no species of cant so strongly marked by a jargon of peculiar phraseology as that of connoisseurship in the fine arts. The connoisseur's vocabulary is besprinkled with a number of indefinite and metaphorical terms, which convey no precise ideas to proficients themselves, who are found widely to differ in their application of them to different performances. Their chief purpose seems to be to furnish with a set of knowing phrases those who think themselves obliged to talk about a thing, whether they have any clear conceptions of it or not.

I shall not lengthen this paper by enumerating the several kinds of professional cant, of which the essence is a speciousness and pretence originally adopted for the purpose of deception, but continued through habit and established form, like the lawyer's wig and the clergyman's cassock. This may have its use in the common intercourse of society, yet it will always be disdained by commanding talents and high-spirited integrity.

ON MOTTOES.

THE application of passages from eminent authors, by way of authority, illustration or ornament, has been a very ancient practice, and in modern times has become a custom which, like all prevalent customs, has often deviated into excess. At the revival of literature, when it was the chief object with men of letters to display the extent of their reading, scarcely any work appeared without a multiplicity of decoration of this kind. Not a pamphlet was published without its mottoes in Greek and Latin, and not a sentiment, however trivial, was hazarded without confirmation by parallel sentences from the ancients. The pedantry of this practice at length became an object of ridicule. It is certain, however, that the moderate use of quotation, when directed by judgment and taste, has been at all times agreeable to cultivated readers, who have received from it the double pleasure of unexpectedly meeting with passages which they have admired in their proper places, and of seeing them happily introduced in new connections.

It is not my intention in the present paper to speak generally of quotations, but only of that species of them which are peculiarly called mottoes. These are short sentences, either prefixed to books, or inscribed on portraits, coats of arms, edifices, devices, and the like, which serve as heads or titles indicating the essential character, object or design. The French have a happy term to express the motto to a device or emblem; they call it *l'ame*, the *soul*. In fact, a well chosen motto contains the spirit or essence of thing to which it is applied.

There are two different modes of application of these quoted passages, which divide them into two distinct classes. In the first the author's words are taken in their proper sense; in the second, they are allusively employed, and transferred to a different meaning. Of the first, the excellence consists in the nervous and pointed expression of the thought which it is intended to enforce: the beauty of the second depends upon starting some unexpected but exact resemblance, which surprises by the ingenuity of the application. Examples shall be given to illustrate this distinction, which it is hoped, may afford some entertainment to the classical reader, whatever be thought of the introductory matter. Those of the first class will take the lead.

A variety of mottoes have been inscribed on clocks and sundials, with the intention of warning the spectator of the unheeded lapse of time. I recollect none superior in energy to the two following, afforded by Seneca's Epistles. "Inscii rapimur." "Nisi properamus, relinquimur." The English language is so inferior in conciseness to the Latin, that no adequate version can be given; but we might say, "Time whirls us on unfelt." "Haste, or you stay behind."

The same author gives in three words what would serve for a striking sentence on a tomb stone, "Abstulit, sed dedit:" the words are similar to those of Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," which is simply pious resignation; but Seneca, who applies them to Fortune, has a different meaning, "She has taken away, but she first gave"—and the lesson is, "Remember that you have enjoyed what you now lament to have lost." By the substitution of Deity to Fortune, it would become pious as well as philosophical.

What Seneca says of certain frivolous and useless modes of sophistical reasoning in his time, would not unaptly apply to the modern subtleties of metaphysicians: "Nec ignoranti nocent, nec scientem juvant:" "Ignorance of them does no harm, and knowledge no good:" which is not quite so satirical as a line on logicians, quoted by Guy Patin,

Gens ratione furens, et mentem pasta chimæris.

A political writer meaning to reproach a nation for its readiness to plunge into war upon any view of profit, might adopt this sentence from Livy, "Maxime omnium belli avida, modo præda aut merces esset." On the other hand, he might apply to an unfeeling despot, who had involved his country in a war destructive to himself and his subjects, these lines from Statius:

Tu merito: ast horum miseret, quos sanguine viles
Conjugibus natisque infanda ad prælia raptos
Projicis exeidio, bone rex!

Unpitied thou! but these deserve a tear,
Who, with their wives and babes, a race despised,
By thee are thrust to slaughter—best of kings!

An incapable minister, whose presumption has led him to assume the direction of the state in a time of danger, which is tenfold augmented by his own rashness and ignorance, could not be more forcibly imaged than in the following simile applied by Silius Italicus to the consul Flaminius in the second Punic war:

Ut pelagi rudis, et pontem tractare per artem
Nescius, accepit miseræ si jura carinæ
Ventorum tenet ipse vicem, cunctisque procellis
Dat jactare ratem; fertur vaga gurgite puppis,
Ipsius in scopulos dextra impellente magistri.

As he who takes a hapless vessel's helm,
New to the sea, nor taught the pilot's art,
Does the storm's office, gives the bark a sport
To every adverse gale; wide o'er the main
She flies, his own rash hand amid the rocks
Steering her fatal course.

It would be an elegant compliment to apply to a master of one of our great schools the lines which Statius in his Sylvæ addresses to a person of the same profession.

Et nunc ex illo forsan grege gentibus alter
Jura dat Eois, alter compescit Iberos;

Hi dites Asiæ populos, hi Pontica frænant,
Hi fora pacificis emendant fascibus, illi
Castra pia statione tenent : tu laudis origo.

And now, perchance, amid the studious flock,
One to the East gives law, one rules the West ;
These the rich Asian tribes, the Pontic these
O'erawe ; in peaceful courts their wholesome sway
These exercise, while those in watchful camps
Their sacred country guard—thine all their praise !

These examples, which, perhaps, will have the merit of novelty to most readers, may suffice for the first class of mottoes. Of the second, the following instances may be given :

There is not, I think, in all Shakespear a passage of greater poetical beauty than that in which Prospero describes the gradual return of reason in those who had been bewildered by his magic. How finely would it apply to the progress of light and knowledge succeeding an age of ignorance and superstition !

The charm dissolves apace ;
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness ; so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason.

A modest writer in Natural History or Natural Philosophy might adopt for his motto the reply of a soothsayer in Antony and Cleopatra, when questioned concerning his knowledge,

In Nature's infinite book of secresy
A little I can read.

I once saw in an edition of Pope's works a line from Ovid happily prefixed in manuscript to the epistle of Eloisa to Abelard. It is taken from the Fasti, where the poet describes the conflagration of the temple of Vesta :

Mistaque erat flammæ flamma profana piæ :
Mixed with a holy flame, a flame profane.

The same hand, to a list of orders of knighthood had written, from Banquo's remark on the witches in Macbeth,

The earth has bubbles as the water hath,
And these are of them.

The cause of the ascent of an air-balloon might be very aptly expressed in the words which Ovid applies to the vapor that arose from the body of Memnon on the funeral pile, and was changed into birds;

> Levitas sua præbuit alas.
>
> Its lightness gave it wings:

and the aëronaut himself might appropriate the words of Perseus in the Metamorphosis, when descending at the court of Scythia from his aërial flight,

> Veni nec puppe per undas,
> Nec pede per terras: patuit mihi pervius æther,
>
> Nor cross the sea, nor o'er the land I came;
> My open path was through the yielding sky.

I am conscious that all these are only the trifles of literature; but they are agreeable trifles, and afford no contemptible exercise for ingenuity; while other things, equally trifling, only exercise industry. One of the most distinguished among modern literary societies was the French Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres, the original object of which was to invent devices and suitable inscriptions for commemorating the glories of the reign of Lous XIV. The purpose was adulatory, but the institution gave birth to many ingenious ideas. That the discovery and application of mottoes is no trivial task, may be inferred from the paltry quibbles that disgrace the arms of many of our nobility, and which may, indeed, prove the antiquity of their families, but indicate the taste of a barbarous age. I am not fond of suggesting new places, or I would propose that some ingenious scholar should be appointed *motto master* to the Heralds' college. The many *parvenus* who would wish to wear their blushing honours with every graceful decoration, might provide a competent salary for such an office.

APPENDIX.

(A. p. 28.)

DESCRIPTIONS OF VEGETABLES FROM THE ROMAN POETS.

IT has been remarked by various critics, that modern poets have in general been much inferior to the ancient, in the truth and accuracy of their descriptions of natural objects. The versifiers of later ages, deriving their art merely from imitation have fallen into a kind of established phraseology in their diction, which, while it cuts off all novelty of imagery, exposes the the writer to perpetual mistakes, from the application of epithets and descriptions according to memory, or the rules of measure, rather than the observation of nature. Those, on the other hand, who were nearer to the original sources of poetical ornament, seldom fail to paint objects in their genuine colours, even though they may be unskilful in the employment and disposition of them. Of this we have a striking instance in the similes of Homer, which, taken separately, are always just and lively pictures, though frequently they have little resemblance to the object to which they are applied. The number of these drawn from the vegetable creation is very small; while Virgil and the other Roman poets, probably from living in a more cultivated state of society, seem particularly fond of introducing trees and other plants into the imagery of their pieces. From a peculiar attention to this subject, I became so struck with the beauty and accuracy with which they had painted some of my favourite objects, that I was led to collect the passages, and to form from them a set of connected poetical descriptions. Some of these it is my intention to offer to the reader.

QUERCUS—THE OAK.

One of the noblest objects in the rural landscape, and a fine image for comparison on various heroical occasions.

The *height* of the oak is referred to by Virgil in the Æneid, where, describing the appearance of the Cyclopses on the shore, he says,

—— quales cum vertice celso
Aëriæ *quercus* aut coniferæ cyparissi
Constiterunt, sylva alta Jovis, lucusve Dianæ.—*Æn.* iii. 679.

So on some mountain towers the lofty grove
Of beauteous Dian, or imperial Jove:
The aërial pines in pointed spires from far,
Or spreading oaks majestic nod in air.—PITT.

And probably it is on account of the same quality, that he selects this tree in particular as suffering from the stroke of lightning.

De cœlo tactas memini prædicere *quercus.*—*Ecl.* i. 17.

And heaven's quick lightning on my blasted oak.
WARTON.

The wide spread of its branches is strongly painted by the same poet in the following passage:

Sicubi magna Jovis antiquo robore *quercus*
Ingentes tendat ramos.—*Georg.* iii. 332.

Where some tall oak uprears his aged shades.—PITT.

Ovid on the same account calls the oak

——— patula Jovis arbor.—*Met.* i. 106.

Jove's far extended tree;

an epithet lost in Dryden's version, whose paraphrase is,

And falling acorns furnish'd out a feast.

Catullus compares the tossing horns of the Minatour to the agitated arms of an oak:

———velut in summo quatientem brachia tauro
Quercum.—CATUL. lxiii. 105.

Several passages in the poets describe *the hardness of its wood.* Thus Ovid in the long string of similes which Polyphemus applies to Galatea, makes him call her

> ——— durior annosa *quercu.*—*Met.* xiii. 799.
>
> — far more stubborn than the knotted oak.—Dryden.

And Virgil describes the operation of splitting an oak, in a line that cannot be read without a degree of effort:

> Quadrifidam *quercum* cuneis ut forte coactis
> Scindebat.—*Æn.* vii. 509.
>
> Tyrrhus, who clove a tree with many a stroke,
> Left the huge wedge within the gaping oak.—Pitt.

Its power of resisting the fury of a storm, from its *strength,* and the *depth* to which its *roots* penetrate, is nobly represented in the following simile:

> Veluti annoso validam cum robore *quercum*
> Alpini Boreæ, nunc hinc, nunc flatibus illinc
> Eruere inter se certant: it stridor, et alte
> Consternunt terram concusso stipite frondes;
> Ipsa hæret scopulis; et quantum vertice ad auras
> Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.—*Æn.* iv. 441.
>
> As o'er th' aërial Alps sublimely spread,
> Some aged oak uprears his reverend head;
> This way and that the furious tempests blow,
> And lay the monarch of the mountains low;
> Th' imperial plant, though nodding at the sound,
> Though all his scatter'd honours strow the ground;
> Safe in his strength, and seated on the rock,
> In naked majesty defies the shock.
> High as the head shoots towering to the skies,
> So deep the root in hell's foundation lies.—Pitt.

Ovid seems to labour to equal or excel the grandeur of this description by a picture of the oak in peaceful majesty, distinguished by its vast bulk, and the almost divine honours which have at various times been paid to it.

> Stabat in his ingens annoso robore *quercus;*
> Una nemus; vittæ mediam, memoresque tabellæ,
> Certaque cingebant voti argumenta potentis.
> Sæpe sub hac Dryades festas duxere choræas:
> Sæpe etiam, manibus nexis ex ordine, trunci
> Circuiere modum: mensuraque roboris ulnas

Quinque ter implebat: necnon et cætera tanto
Sylva sub hac, sylva quanto jacet herba sub omni.
Met. viii. 743.

An ancient oak in the dark centre stood,
The covert's glory, and itself a wood;
Garlands embraced its shaft, and from the boughs
Hung tablets, monuments of prosperous vows.
In the cool dusk its unpierced verdure spread,
The Dryads oft their hallowed dances led;
And oft when round their guaging arms they cast,
Full fifteen ells it measured in the waste;
Its height all under standards did surpass,
As they aspired above the humbler grass.—DRYDEN.

The bold expression "una nemus," *itself a grove*, would scarcely apply to any other European tree, and is therefore equally appropriate and poetical.

Lucan has given a picture of the oak at a different period; no longer firm and stable, but decayed with age and ready to fall with the first blast, yet still appearing great and venerable, and forming a shade, though with its naked branches. Its application as a simile is not less happy, than the description is striking. It is made an emblem of Pompey the Great, at the commencement of the civil war, with all his honours still about him, yet in reality, only the shadow of his former greatness.

Exuvias veteres populi, sacrataque gestans
Dona ducum; nec jam validis radicibus hærens,
Pondere fixa suo est; nudosque per aëra ramos
Effundens, trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram:
Sed quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
Tot circum sylvæ firmo se robore tollant,
Sola tamen colitur.—*Phars*. i. 37.

So in the field with Ceres' bounty spread,
Uprears some mighty oak his reverend head;
Chaplets and sacred gifts his boughs adorn,
And spoils of war by mighty heroes worn.
But the first vigour of his root now gone,
He stands dependent on his weight alone;
All bare his naked branches are display'd,
And with his leafless trunk he forms a shade:
Yet though the winds his ruin daily threat,
As every blast would heave him from his seat;
Though thousand fairer trees the field supplies
That rich in youthful verdure round him rise;
Fix'd in his ancient state he yields to none,
And wears the honours of the grove alone.

The *martial character* (as it may be termed) of this tree, probably occasioned it to be used as the basis for trophies; the captured arms of the foe being hung on an oaken trunk. Thus Æneas raises a trophy of the arms of Mezentius in honour of the God of War:

> Ingentem *quercum* decisis undique ramis
> Constituit tumulo.—*Æn.* xi. 5.
>
> And bared an oak of all her verdant boughs.—Pitt.

The use of the *fruit* of the oak as an *article of food* in the early ages of the world is alluded to in almost innumerable passages of the poets. There were several kinds of glandes, but those of the oak, by us termed acorns, were preferred for the use of man. This we learn from Pliny; and might also infer from a line in Virgil, in which he threatens the negligent husbandman with being compelled again to shake the oak for his subsistence.

> Concussaque famem in sylvis solabere quercu.—*Georg.* i. 159.
>
> Thou'lt shake from forest oaks thy tasteless food.—Warton.

Ulmus—The Elm.

This stately tree was too beautiful and striking an object among the inhabitants of the grove to be neglected by the poets. One of its most obvious and distinguishing characters is extraordinary loftiness. Hence Virgil, in his first eclogue, introduces it with a suitable epithet, and with peculiar propriety represents the shy and plaintive turtle as making her seat on its summit.

> Nec gemere aëria cessabit turtur ab *ulmo.*—*Ecl.* i. 59.
>
> Nor turtles from th' aërial elm to plain.—Warton.

In another place he finely paints the effect of a scorching heat by the circumstance of the bark withering on the tall elm: a very natural consequence of the great height to which the sap must ascend for its sustenance.

> Nec si, cum moriens alta liber aret in *ulmo,*
> Æthiopum versemus oves sub sidere Cancri.—*Ecl.* x. 67.

While the bark withers on the lofty elm,
We feed an Æthiops' flock 'mid Cancer's beams.

A minute attention to propriety is scarcely any where more conspicuous in this great poet, than in the choice he makes of the elm for the tree on which to fix a mark for the javelin. The height and straightness of its trunk, and its freedom from branches, according to the usual mode of training it, rendered it the fittest that could be pitched upon for this purpose.

——pecorisque magistris
Velocis jaculi certamina ponit in *ulmo*.—*Georg*. ii. 530.

And places for the masters of the flock,
On some high elm the rapid javelin's mark.

From the manner of growth of this tree, its use for the support of the weak and curling vine was universally deduced; nor is any rural circumstance more frequently alluded to by the poets, in simile or description. Some instances of this will hereafter be quoted, under the article Vine; it may now be sufficient to remark, that Virgil selects the junction of the elm and vine as the discriminating topic of one whole book of his Georgics.

———— quo sidere terram
Vertere, Mæcenas, *ulmisque* adjungere vites,
Conveniat.—*Georg*. i. 1.

Beneath what heavenly signs the glebe to turn,
Round the tall elm how circling vines to lead.—WARTON.

A distinguishing property of the elm, its increasing by means of a thick crop of suckers pushed up from the roots, is noticed by Virgil.

Pullulat ab radice aliis densissima sylva.—*Georg*. ii. 17.

Some from the root a rising wood disclose:
Thus elms, and thus the savage cherry grows.—DRYDEN.

One of the uses to which the elm was applied, with the peculiar manner of fitting it for that purpose, is mentioned by the same writer:

Continuo in sylvis magna vi flexa domatur
In burim, et curvi formam accipit *ulmus* aratri.—*Georg*. i. 169.

Young elms with early force in copses bow,
Fit for the figure of the crooked plough.—Dryden.

The expression of *magna vi flexa,* "bent by great force," seems to denote great strength and toughness of the wood; and in another place Virgil characterises the elm by the epithet *fortis,* where he tells us, too, that there were several species of this tree:

Præterea genus haud unum, nec fortibus *ulmis.*—*Georg.* ii. 83.

Besides not one the kind of sturdy elms.

This poet slightly touches upon another use of the elm, which is not intelligible without the aid of the agricultural writers. He says,

Viminibus salices fœcundæ, frondibus ulmi.—*Georg.* ii. 446.

Willows in twigs are fruitful, elms in leaves.—Dryden.

Cattle we learn were fed with the leaves of elms, which were a most agreeable repast to them; and Mr. Evelyn mentions the same practice as prevailing in some parts of this country in his time.

The elm in its natural state of a wide spreading shady tree, is pitched upon by Virgil as the roosting place of dreams in Orcus:

In medio ramos annosaque brachia pandit
Ulmus opaca, ingens: quam sedem somnia vulgo
Vana tenere ferunt, foliisque sub omnibus hærent.—*Æn.* vi. 282.

Full in the midst a spreading elm display'd
His aged arms, and cast a mighty shade;
Each trembling leaf with some light vision teems,
And heaves impregnated with airy dreams.—Pitt.

This kind of tree was probably here chosen, not only for its closeness and multitude of leaves, but also as one of those which by the ancients were reckoned barren, and therefore of the funereal and ill omened class; on which principle it was usually planted round tombs.

Ilex—The Holm Oak.

The Ilex is another glandiferous tree, differing, according to

Pliny, from the Oak, in having leaves serrated, and like those of the Bay, and in bearing smaller acorns. Ovid peculiarly marks it as a glandiferous tree, and as being very fertile:

> ——— curvataque glandibus *ilex*.—*Met.* x. 94.
>
> The holm-oak bent with mast.

It appears to have been a very common species in Italy, and that of which woods and groves were chiefly composed. The poets usually add to it the epithet of *niger*, which corresponds with the dark hue common to all evergreens, of which this is one. Thus Virgil,

> *Ilice* sub nigra palentes ruminat herbas.—*Ec.* vi. 54.
>
> Chews the pale herbs beneath the dusky holm.

> ——————————— nigrum
> *Ilicibus* crebris sacra nemus adcubet umbra.—*Georg.* iii. 334.
>
> Or where the ilex forest dark and deep
> Sheds holy horrors o'er the hanging steep.—Pitt.

> Sylva fuit late dumis atque *ilice* nigra.—*Æn.* ix. 381.
>
> Horrid the wood wide spread with tangled brakes
> And ilex dark.

Horace adds to this quality, those of hardiness and vigorous vegetation, and even selects it for a comparison with the noble character of the Roman people:

> Duris ut *ilex* tonsa bipennibus
> Nigræ feraci frondis in Algido,
> Per damna, per cædes ab ipso
> Ducit opes animumque ferro.—*Carm.* iv. 4. 57.
>
> As the black ilex, shorn by vigorous steel,
> Sprouts on the mountain's verdant side;
> From wounds, from deaths, no dread, no loss they feel,
> But grow in strength, and rise in pride.

It appears however that the wood of the Ilex was much subject to decay; for the epithet "hollow" is particularly applied to it by Virgil:

> ——— cava prædixit ab *ilice* cornic.—*Ec.* i. 18.
>
> With boding croaks the hollow ilex rung.

And this he confirms by the observation that bees frequently made their hives in its cavities.

——————— apes examina condunt
Corticibusque cavis, vitiosæque *ilicis* alveo.—*Georg*. ii. 452.

In hollow bark the bees their offspring hide,
And in the mouldering holm-oak's vacant side.

This remark shows the propriety of particularising the Ilex in the two following passages:

Mella cavâ manant ex *ilice*.—Hor. *Epod*. xvi. 47.
Flavaque de viridi stillabant *ilice* mella.—Ovid. *Met*. i. 112.

From the green ilex yellow honey flowed.

I confess, however, that these lines have the air of that poetical phraseology for which I have censured the modern poets.

This tree probably delighted in a rocky soil, and the neighbourhood of water; for Horace describes it as overshadowing the source of his sweet fountain Blandusia.

Fies nobilium tu quoque fontium,
Me dicente cavis impositam *ilicem*
  Saxis, unde loquaces
  Lymphæ desiliunt tuæ.—*Carm*. iii. 13. 13.

Soon shalt thou flow a noble spring,
While in immortal verse I sing
The trees that spread the rocks around
From whence thy prattling waters bound.—Francis.

The peculiar species of tree is lost in this translation.

With respect to its œconomical uses, we learn from Virgil that troughs for water were made of this wood.

Currentem *ilignis* potare canalibus undam.—*Georg*. iii. 330.

From troughs of ilex made to drink the stream.

And that it was particularly used for the construction of funeral pyres.

Erecta ingenti (pyra,) tædis atque *ilice* secta.—*Æn*. iv. 505.

A mighty pyre of fir and holm.

We learn moreover from Horace, that the finest flavoured wild boars were those fed on the acorns of the Ilex.

Umber, et *iligna* nutritus glande rotundas
Curvet aper lances carnem vitantis inertem.—*Sat*. ii. 4. 40.

The boar from Umbria, fed with ilex-mast,
Shall load his dish who hates a vapid taste.

Fagus—The Beech.

There is no doubt, from Pliny's description, that the *Fagus* of the Romans was our Beech; and few as the circumstances are which the poets have mentioned relative to this tree, they are yet sufficient to mark it with tolerable precision.

The thickness of its foliage, and wide spreading of its branches, which invited the shepherds of Italy to repose beneath its shade during the heats of noon, are twice introduced into the beautiful scenery of Virgil's Eclogues.

Tityre, tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine *fagi*,
Sylvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.—*Ec.* i. 1.

Beneath the shade which beechen boughs diffuse,
You, Tityrus, entertain your sylvan muse.—Dryden.

Tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, *fagos*
Assidue veniebat.—*Ec.* ii. 3.

'Midst shades of thickest beech he pined alone.—Warton.

The use of its smooth and green bark for receiving inscriptions from the sylvan pen of lovers (as Thomson calls it) is noticed by the same poet.

Imo hæc, in viridi nuper quæ cortice *fagi*
Carmina descripsi, et modulans alterna notavi,
Experiar.—*Ec.* v. 13.

Rather I'll try those verses to repeat
Which on a beech's verdant bark I writ:
I writ and sung between.—Warton.

Ovid refers to the same custom; and adds the beautiful thought of the name of the fair one growing and spreading with the growth of the tree.

Incisæ servant a te mea nomina *fagi*,
  Et legor Œnone, falce notata tua.
Et quantum trunci, tantum mea nomina crescunt:
  Crescite, et in titulos surgite recta meos.—*Ep. Œnon. Par.* 21.

The beeches, faithful guardians of your flame,
Bear on their wounded trunks Œnone's name.
And as the trunks, so still the letters grow:
Spread on; and fair aloft my titles show.

The wood of the beech was used formerly, as at present, by the turner; and vessels made of it were considered as suited to the simplicity of the pastoral times.

——————— nec bella fuerunt,
Faginus adstabat cum scyphus ante dapes.—Tibul. i. 11.

————— nor raged the sword,
When beechen bowls stood on the frugal board.

Yet this cheap material was capable of receiving a considerable value from the hand of the carver. Thus Virgil's shepherd stakes a cup of this sort as one of his most valuable possessions.

——————— pocula ponam
Fagina, cœlatum divini opus Alcimedontis.—*Ecl.* iii. 36.

Two beauteous bowls of beechen wood are mine,
The sculpture of Alcimedon divine.—Warton.

Beech timber, as we learn from Virgil, was likewise employed in the construction of ploughs; and though the passage is not very clear, it would seem that the *stiva*, or plough-staff, was made of this wood.

Cæditur et tilia ante jugo levis, altaque *fagus*,
Stivaque, quæ currus a turgo torqueat imos.—*Georg*. i. 173.

Light to the yoke the linden feels the wound,
And the tall beech lies stretch'd along the ground;
They fall for staves that guide the ploughshare's course.
Warton.

(B. p. 122.)

BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

LATE REV. DR. ENFIELD.

THE Rev. William Enfield, LL.D. was born at Sudbury in Suffolk, on March 29th, 1741, O. S. In common with many other characters of moral and literary excellence, it was his lot to come into the world destitute of the advantages of birth or fortune. His parents were in a humble condition of life, which they rendered respectable by their virtues. His early education was probably on the narrow scale marked out by his circumstances. By his amiable disposition and promising parts he recommended himself to the Rev. Mr. Hextall, the dissenting minister of the place, who treated him with peculiar notice, and took pleasure in forming his youthful mind. He particularly awakened in him a sensibility to the beauties of our principal poets; among whom, Akenside, by the charms of his versification, and the exalted tone of his philosophy, was a peculiar favourite both with the instructor and the pupil. It appears to me no unreasonable supposition that to his early fondness for this author, Dr. Enfield was indebted, more than to any other single circumstance, for that uniform purity of language, that entire freedom from any thing like vulgarity, as well in conversation as in writing, by which he was ever distinguished. Mr. Hextall's good opinion was probably the chief cause of his being devoted to the christian ministry. In his 17th year he was sent to the academy at Daventry, then conducted by the Rev. Dr. Ashworth. At this seminary he passed through the usual course of preparatory study for the pulpit. Of his academical character I know no more than that he was always conspicuous for the elegance of his compositions; and that he was among the number of those students whose inquiries led them to adopt a less rigid system of christianity than was the established doctrine of the place.

It was a striking proof of the attractions he possessed as a preacher, and as an amiable man in society, that almost immediately on leaving the academy he was invited to undertake the office of sole minister to the congregation of Benn's Garden in Liverpool, one of the most respectable among the dissenters. To that situation he was ordained in November 1763; and in a town abounding with agreeable society, and distinguished by liberal sentiments and hospitable manners, he passed seven of the happiest years of his life. He married, in 1767, Mary, the only daughter of Mr. Holland, draper in Liverpool; and a most cordial union of thirty years gave full proof of the felicity of his choice. Though greatly engaged both in the present intercourses of society, and in the serious duties of his office, he commenced in this place his literary career with two volumes of sermons, printed in 1768 and 1770, which were very favourably received by the public. Their pleasing moral strain, marked by no systematic peculiarities, so well adapted them for general use, that many congregations, besides that in which they were originally preached, had the benefit of the instruction they conveyed. A collection of Hymns, for the use of his congregation, and of Family Prayers of his own composition, for private use, further added to his professional and literary reputation.

On the death of the Rev. Mr. Seddon of Warrington, Mr. Enfield was one of the first persons thought of by the trustees of the academical institution founded in that place, to succeed him in the offices of tutor in the belles-lettres, and of resident conductor of the discipline, under the title of *Rector Academiæ*. With respect to his fitness for the first, no doubt could be entertained. The second was an untried exertion, depending for its success upon qualities of temper rarely meeting in one individual. Whatever could be effected by those amiable endowments which conciliate affection, might be hoped from one who was become the delight of a large circle of acquaintance; but in those emergencies where firmness, resolution, and a kind of dignified severity of conduct, might be requisite, there was cause to apprehend a failure. He had his misgivings, but they were overcome by the encouragement and importunity of friends; and the offered situation was in several respects such as might flatter a young man, fond of literary society, and ambitious of a proper field for the display of his talents. He accepted it, together with the office of minister to the dissenting congregation of Warrington. The occupations in which he engaged were extensive and complicated; but no man had ever a better right to confide in his own industry and readiness.

Every one acquainted with the attempts that have been made by the dissenters to institute places of education for the advanced periods of youth, must have been sensible of the extreme difficulty of uniting the liberal plan of a collegiate life with such a system of internal dicipline as shall secure sobriety of manners, and diligence in the pursuit of study. Those sanctions which, however imperfectly, serve as engines of government in seminaries established by the state, must ever be wanting in private institutions, which cannot annex to the grossest violation of their laws a higher penalty than simple expulsion, followed by no disabilities or deprivations, and probably held extremely cheap by those who have most deserved it. Warrington had a full share of this difficulty; and also laboured under others, which rendered its existence, though at times it appeared flourishing and respectable, little better than a long struggle against incurable disease. The efforts of Dr. Enfield were faithfully joined with those of his colleagues, to support its credit, and to remedy evils as they occurred. His diligence was exemplary; his services as a public and private tutor were numerous and valuable; his attention to discipline was, at least, uninterrupted; but it may be acknowledged that the arduous post of domestic superintendant, and enforcer of the laws, was not that for which he was best calculated. So sensible, indeed, was he of his deficiency in this respect, and so much did he find his tranquillity injured by the scenes to which he was exposed, that he made a very serious attempt to free himself from the burden, by resigning this part of his charge; and it was only after the failure of various applications by the trustees to engage a successor, that he suffered himself to be persuaded to retain it. In fine, the crisis of the institution arrived in 1783, and its embarrassments were cured by its dissolution.

However toilsome and anxious this period of Dr. Enfield's life might have been, it was that of rapid mental improvement. By the company he kept, and the business he had to go through, his faculties were strained to full exertion: nor was it only as a tutor that he employed his talents; he greatly extended his reputation as a writer. The following list comprises those works which he published during his residence at Warrington. Several of them belong to the humble but useful class of compilations; yet in them he found occasion to display the elegance of his taste, and the soundness of his judgment.

A Sermon at the Ordination of the Rev. Philip Taylor; 1770.

The Preacher's Directory; 1771, 4to.

The English Preacher; a Collection of Sermons abridged and selected from various authors; 9 vols. 12mo. 1773.

An Essay toward the History of Liverpool, from the papers of the late Mr. Geo. Perry, with other materials since collected; small fol. 1774.

Observations on Literary Property; 4to. 1770.

The Speaker; or Miscellaneous Pieces selected from the best English Writers, for the purposes of Reading and Speaking; 8vo. 1774. To this very popular Work was prefixed an Essay on Elocution; and to a subsequent edition was subjoined an Essay on Reading Works of Taste.

Biographical Sermons, on the principal Characters mentioned in the Old and New Testament; 12mo. 1777.

A Sermon on the Death of Mr. J. Gallway, a Student in the Academy at Warrington; 1777.

A Sermon on the Ordination of the Rev. J. Prior Estlin; 1778.

A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. J. Aikin, D. D. 1780.

Exercises in Elocution, being a Sequel to the Speaker; 8vo. 1781. To an edition of this in 1794 was added, Counsels for Young Men.

A Collection of Hymns; intended as a Supplement to Watt's Psalms; 1781.

A Translation of Rossignol's Elements of Geometry; 8vo.

Institutes of Natural Philosophy, Theoretical and Experimental; 4to. 1783.

It will be remarked, that mathematical science is included among the later topics; and no circumstance is better adapted to give an idea of the power of his mind than the occasion and manner of his taking up this abstruse study, which had previously by no means been a favourite with him. On a vacancy in the mathematical department of the academy, it was found impracticable to give adequate encouragement from the funds it possessed to a separate tutor in that branch. Dr. Enfield was therefore strongly urged to undertake it; and by the hard study of one vacation he qualified himself to set out with a new class, which he instructed with great clearness and precision; himself advancing in the science in proportion to the demand, till he became a very excellent teacher in all the parts which were requisite in the academical course.

The degree of doctor of laws, which added a new title to his name during his residence at Warrington, was conferred upon him by the university of Edinburgh.

After the dissolution of the academy, Dr. Enfield remained two years at Warrington, occupied in the education of private pupils, a small number of whom he took as boarders, and in the care of his congregation. For the instruction of the latter he drew up a series of discourses on the principal incidents and moral precepts of the gospel, in which he displayed both his talents as a commentator, and his skill in expanding into general lessons of conduct, those hints and particular observations which occur in the sacred narratives. This will not be an improper place to give some account of Dr. Enfield's character as a preacher and a divine. His manner of delivery was grave and impressive, affecting rather a tenor of uniform dignity than a variety of expression, for which his voice was not well calculated. It was entirely free from what is called *tone*, and though not highly animated, was by no means dull, and never careless or indifferent. As to his matter, it was almost exclusively that of a *moral preacher*. Religion was to him rather a principle than a sentiment; and he was more solicitous to deduce from it *a rule of life*, enforced by its peculiar sanctions, than to elevate it into a source of sublime feeling. Despising superstition, and fearing enthusiasm, he held as of inferior value every thing in religion which could not ally itself with morality, and condescend to human uses. His theological system was purged of every mysterious or unintelligible proposition; it included nothing which appeared to him irreconcileable with sound philosophy, and the most rational opinions concerning the divine nature and perfections. Possibly the test of rationality might with him supersede that of literary criticism. It will be seen from the subjects selected for this publication, that moral topics were much more congenial to him than doctrinal ones; and his character as a public instructor must be derived from the manner in which he has treated these. Probably it will be found that scarcely any writer has entered with more delicacy into the minute and less obvious points of morality—has more skilfully marked out the nice discriminations of virtue and vice, of the fit and unfit. He has not only delineated the path of the strictly right, but of the amiable and becoming. He has aimed at rendering mankind not only mutually serviceable, but mutually agreeable; and has delighted in painting true goodness with all those colours which it was said of old would make her so enchanting should she ever become visible to mortal eyes.

It will, perhaps, be expected that something should be said of Dr. Enfield in the peculiar character of a *Dissenter.* To *dissent* was by no means a part of his natural disposition; on the contrary, he could not without a struggle differ from those whom he saw dignified by station, respectable for learning and morals, and amiable in the intercourse of society. Nor was the voice of authority, when mildly and reasonably exerted, a signal to him of resistance, but rather a call to acquiescence. It is therefore not to be wondered at, that there was a period in his life when he looked towards the religious establishment of his country with a wish that no insuperable barrier should exist to the admission of those who, without violating the absolute dictates of conscience, might desire to join it. Inclined by temper and system to think well of mankind, and to entertain sanguine hopes of their progress towards truth and reason, he could not bring himself to imagine that the active efforts (which we may all remember) of many excellent persons to produce a further reform in the English church, and render the terms of entrance into its ministry more easy and liberal, would in the end fail of their effect. This idea dwelt long and weightily on his mind, and disposed him rather to regard the conformities, than the differences, between systems which he expected to see continually more nearly approaching each other. Moreover, the correct and elegant language, and the manly strain of morality, which then characterised the pulpit compositions of the most eminent of the clergy, commanded his entire approbation; and he thought that a mutual oblivion of topics of controversy might take place, from a consent in all friends of rational religion to confine their public discourses to subjects on which no differences existed between them. He lived, however, to see all his expectations of this amicable union frustrated—to see hierarchical claims maintained more dogmatically than before—and the chief stress of religion placed upon those doctrines in which the English church-articles most differ from the opinions of that class of dissenters to which he belonged. He lived, therefore, to become a more decided separatist than ever; and I am sure, that for many years before his death, though all his personal candour and good will towards the opposite party remained, no consideration would have induced him to range himself under its banners. The rights of private judgment and public discussion, and all the fundamental points of civil and religious liberty, were become more and more dear to him; and he asserted them with a courage and zeal which seemed scarcely to belong to his habitual temper. A very manly discourse, which he published in 1788, on the hundredth anniversary of the revolution, sufficiently testifies his sentiments on these important subjects.

It is now time to return to biographical narrative. In 1785, receiving an invitation from the congregation of the Octagon chaple at Norwich, a society with whom any man might esteem it an honour and happiness to be connected, he accepted it, under the condition of residing at a small distance from the city, and continuing his plan of domestic tuition. He first settled at the pleasant village of Thorpe; but at length he found it more convenient to remove to Norwich itself. Though he was eminently happy in his mode of educating a small number, of which several striking examples might be adduced; yet, like most who have adopted that plan, he found that the difficulty of keeping up a regular supply of pupils, and the unpleasant restraint arising from a party of young men, so far domiciliated, that they left neither time nor place for family privacy, more than compensated the advantages to be derived from such an employment of his talents. He finally removed, therefore, to a smaller habitation, entire declined receiving boarders, and only gave private instructions to two or three select pupils a few hours in the forenoon. At length he determined to be perfectly master of his own time, and to give to his family, friends, and spontaneous literary pursuits, all the leisure he possessed from his professional duties. The circumstances of his family confirmed him in this resolution. He was the father of two sons and three daughters, all educated under his own eye; and had he had no other examples to produce of his power of making himself at the same time a friend and a tutor—of conciliating the most tender affection with ready and undeviating obedience—his children would, by all who knew them, be admitted as sufficient proofs of this happy art. They became every thing that their parents could wish;—but the eldest son, after passing with uncommon reputation through his clerkship to an attorney (Mr. Roscoe of Liverpool,) and advancing so far in his professional career as to be appointed, when just of age, town-clerk of Nottingham, was suddenly snatched away by a fever. The doctor bore his grievous loss with exemplary resignation; but the struggle produced effects on his health which alarmed his friends. Symptoms resembling those of the fatal disease termed *angina pectoris* came on; indeed, it may be said that he really laboured under an incipient state of this disorder. But time, medicine, and happier subjects of reflection, restored him to health and cheerfulness. He had the felicity of seeing two of his daughters most desirably settled in marriage. His remaining son bid fair to become all that the other had been. He was, therefore, fully entitled to enjoy himself in the domestic freedom he loved, and to confine his future exertions to those lettered employments which, to one of his industrious habits, were necessary to give a zest to social relaxation.

He had not yet completely detached himself from the business of tuition, when he undertook the most laborious of his literary tasks, an abridgement of *Brucker's History of Philosophy.* This work appeared in two volumes 4to. in the year 1791, and would alone have been sufficient to establish the writer's character as a master of the middle style of composition, and as a judicious selector of what was most valuable in the representation of manners and opinions. The original work has obtained a high reputation among the learned, for the depth of its researches, and the liberality of its spirit; but its Latin style is involved and prolix, and the heaviness that pervades the whole has rendered it rather a book for occasional consultation than for direct perusal. Dr. Enfield's abridgement is a work equally instructive and agreeable; and it may be pronounced that the tenets of all the leading sects of philosophers were never before, in the English language, displayed with such elegance and perspicuity. It was, indeed, his peculiar talent to arrange and express other men's ideas to the greatest advantage. His style, chaste, clear, correct, free from all affectation and singularity, was proper for all topics; and the spirit of method and order which reigned in his own mind, communicated itself to every subject which he touched upon. These qualities, together with that candour which was interwoven in his very constitution, especially fitted him to take a part in a literary journal; and to one of the most respectable of these works he was long a considerable contributor. The institution of a new magazine, under the name of the *Monthly*, which in its plan embraced a larger circle of original literature than usual with these miscellanies, engaged him to exercise his powers as an essayist on a variety of topics; and the papers with which he enriched it, under the title of *The Inquirer*, obtained great applause from the manly freedom of their sentiments, and the correct elegance of their language.

Thus did his latter years glide on, tranquil and serene, in the bosom of domestic comfort, surrounded by friends to whom he became continually more dear, and in the midst of agreeable occupations. So well confirmed did his health appear, and so much did he feel himself in the full vigour and maturity of his powers, that he did not hesitate, in the year 1796, to associate himself with the writer of this account, one of his oldest and most intimate companions, in a literary undertaking of great magnitude, which looked to a distant period for its completion. Were it not the duty of mortals to employ their talents in the way they can approve, without regarding contingencies which they can neither foresee nor overrule, such an engagement, in persons descending into the vale of years, might be accused of presumption; but it implied in them no more than a resolution to act with diligence as long as they should be permitted to act—to work while it is called to-day, mindful of that approaching night when no man can work. The composition, that of a *General Biographical Dictionary*, proved so agreeable to Dr. Enfield, that he was often heard to say his hours of study had never passed so pleasantly with him; and the progress he made was proportioned to his industry and good will. Every circumstance seemed to promise him years of comfort in store. He was happy himself, and imparted that happiness to all who came within the sphere of his influence. But an incurable disease was in the mean time making unsuspected advances. A scirrhous contraction of the rectum, denoting itself only by symptoms which he did not understand, and which, therefore, he imperfectly described to his medical friends, was preparing, without pain or general disease, to effect a sudden and irresistible change. The very day before this disorder manifested itself he was complimented on his cheerful spirits and healthy looks, and himself confessed that he had nothing, bodily or mental, of which he ought to complain. But the obstruction was now formed. A sickness came on, the proper functions of the intestines were suspended, nothing was able to give relief; and after a week, passed rather in constant uneasiness than in acute pain, with his faculties entire nearly to the last, foreseeing the fatal event, and meeting it with manly fortitude, he sunk in the arms of his children and friends, and expired without a struggle. This catastrophe took place on November 3d, 1797, in the fifty-seventh year of his life. The deep regrets of all who knew him—of those the most to whom he was best known—render it unnecessary to enter into any further description of a character, the essense of which was *to be amiable.* A man's writings have often proved very inadequate tests of his dispositions. Those of Dr. Enfield, however, are not. They breathe the very spirit of his gentle and generous soul. He loved mankind, and wished nothing so much as to render them the worthy objects of love. This is the leading character of those of his discourses which have been selected for publication; as it is, indeed, of all he composed. May their effect equal the most sanguine wishes of their benevolent author!

(C. p. 122.)

DESCRIPTION

OF THE

COUNTRY ABOUT DORKING.

It is a sufficiently trite remark, that objects of admiration and curiosity near at hand are commonly neglected for those at a distance; and that even their existence is often unknown to those who might become spectators of them any day of their lives. I was never more struck with the truth of this observation, than on a late residence for some weeks at Dorking, in Surrey, the vicinity of which place affords scenes not only of such uncommon beauty, but of so romantic a cast, as few would expect to meet with so near the metropolis. I should probably have made use of the term *picturesque* to characterise the general scenery of this district, had I not been fully convinced by the ingenious Mr. Gilpin, that this word loses all true meaning the instant we deviate from its etymological definition, that of "fitness for pictured representation." Now, being myself but a very inadequate judge of this point, and, moreover, considering it as a manifest degradation of natural beauty and sublimity to submit their merit to the test of the capacity of art to copy them, I shall rather obliterate from my descriptive vocabulary an epithet, however fashionable, than employ it without distinct ideas.

The tract of which I mean to attempt a slight sketch, may be reckoned to commence at the pleasant village of Leatherhead, whence a narrow valley extends southwards, forming the bed of the small river Mole, in its course from the foot of Box-hill. The western side of this valley is composed of a chain of heights, the principal part of which is comprehended in the precincts of

Norbury park. To them succeed the hills of Ranmer and Denbeighs, which last bends round to join the long ridge running towards Guilford. The eastern side of this valley is formed by the rising grounds of Leatherhead and Mickleham Downs, and finally by Box-hill, which like its opposite Denbeighs, sweeps round to form the ridge running on to Ryegate, and thence quite into Kent. Thus, the vale of Leatherhead, after a course of about four miles, terminates perpendicularly in another vale, opening on each hand from the town of Dorking, and extending many miles in an eastern and western direction. The river Mole, entering Leatherhead vale from the foot of Box hill, and meandering through it from side to side, bestows on it a beautiful verdure and rich vegetation, though from its narrowness and scanty supply of water, it contributes little to the landscape.

Many are the elegant seats and pleasant farms and cottages which decorate this delightful vale; but its two capital objects are Norbury park on one hand, and Box hill on the other. *Norbury park* is well known as the domain of Mr. Locke, a gentleman highly celebrated for the elegance and correctness of his taste. It is fortunate that a tract so favoured by nature should have fallen to the lot of a master capable of giving it all the advantages of art, in a style perfectly correspondent with its natural character. The grounds of Norbury consists of rich meadows bordering on the Mole, and abruptly terminating in the steep green sides of a range of irregular eminences, of considerable height, and uniting into a common level at the top. Chalk hills, of which kind are those in question, have commonly a grotesque singularity in their outline. They give the idea of having been formed by vast masses of liquid mortar, poured along over a plain, and at once setting into solidity. Hence, with a general rotundity of shape, the edges are composed of unequal prominences, pushing into or retiring from the subjacent low grounds, and separated from each other by deep narrow ravines. Such is the surface nature has given to Norbury park. Art has contributed the dress and decoration by means of planting; and this has been managed so as to produce the most striking effects. The bottom of meadow is besprinkled with fine trees, partly following the windings of the river, partly forming rows or avenues, and partly scattered without obvious order. The bold ascents, consisting of round knolls and amphitheatrical sweeps, are for the most part left in their natural nakedness; but the ravines are filled up with shrubs and trees, which shade all deformities, and add great softness and richness to the whole. The summit of the eminence is crowned by noble masses of trees, expanding into full luxuriance, and appearing either as detached groups, or long connected ranges, according to the points whence they are viewed. In the midst of these, on the very edge of a commanding brow, the house is placed; an edifice of striking though not quite regular architecture, and well fitted to reign over the domain in which it is placed. Some fine larches planted near it just on the descent stamp it with somewhat of an alpine character, which its elevation above the vale, and the great variety and extent of prospect visible from it, enable it to maintain. The level plain around the house is a lawn interspersed with timber, chiefly beech, disposed either in grand clumps, or in single trees of vast magnitude, filling the eye with the gigantic rotundity of their forms. The planting is so managed that the lawn seems to terminate all round in a close wood, of which the boundaries are not discoverable. From the house extends a sort of terrace on the brow of the eminence, which at length leads to a thick plantation clothing the steep sides of a precipitous declivity. Through this are led rides and walks, presenting sylvan scenes of exquisite beauty, in which the beeches, drawn up to a vast height with straight unbranched trunks, acquire a character of airy elegance, totally different from the massy roundness of this tree when suffered to expand without interruption A very beautiful appendage to the planting of Norbury, not readily discoverable by a stranger, is a close walk round a coppice or plantation on the back of the park, formed of young trees, among which the pendent birch is one of the most frequent. This walk winds round in the most free and graceful curves, by which the view is successively lost in foliage, and again recovered in long reaches. The trees on each hand form a skreen, just thick enough to exclude surrounding objects, yet admitting a soft and chequered light, the effect of which is rather cheerful than gloomy. In many places the trees arch over at the top. Here and there, in peculiarly happy situations, views are opened into the surrounding country; but these do not impair the leading character of the walk, which is that of perfect retirement. I do not recollect ever to have felt a sweeter emotion of the kind, than when accident first led me to this sequestered spot.

In the descriptions of celebrated places, I think the distinction is seldom clearly made between the scenes they themselves afford, and the prospects to be viewed from them. Yet this is a distinction obvious and material. Some spots, if denuded of every ornament of their own, and left merely in a state of nature, would be eagerly resorted to as stations whence surrounding beauties might be viewed to the greatest advantage. Others, like the spots of verdure in an African desert, contain within themselves all the charms they have to boast. The happiest situations combine both these circumstances; but rarely in equal proportions. Norbury-park, naturally a sterile soil, has been rendered, chiefly by exquisite skill in planting, a fine object in itself; but the prospects from it are beauties gratuitously bestowed upon its local situation, which perhaps contribute most to its pre-eminence among the seats in its neighbourhood. From the houses and the whole crest of the eminence on which it is placed, successive views open of the subjacent valley and the remoter distances, scarcely to be paralleled for their gay variety and finished softness. Northwards, Leatherhead, with the variegated country beyond it extending towards Kingston and Epsom;—directly opposite, the charming village of Mickelham, backed by its fine green downs;—onwards to the south-east, the seat of Sir Lucas Pepys, apparently lying upon the bosom of a steep pine-clad hill, of truly alpine character;—somewhat further, Box-hill, presenting its precipitous side, partly disclosing bare and craggy spots of chalk, partly clothed with its proper shrub, of peculiar hue;—beyond it, the richly wooded eminences of parks and seats near Dorking, bending round to the south, and terminating an intermediate vale of perfect beauty, divided to the eye by the aid of planting into separate portions, made more or less extensive at pleasure, and forming landscapes which I should have called singularly picturesque, had I not doubted of the power of painting to give any adequate idea of scenes lying in such a striking manner immediately beneath the sight. Mr. Gilpin, in his late Western Tour, has given a sketch of the prospects from Norbury; and from his remarks may be gathered how they appear to an eye in search of the true *picturesque.* I believe, however, that a more untaught spectator, gratified with the charms of nature, without referring them to a remoter test, would receive from them a purer delight. Mr. Locke's celebrated *painted room* is, in fact, the subject of much more of Mr. Gilpin's description than the park itself. This room, presenting a fine landscape on each of its sides, together with the decorations of figures, foliage, flowers, &c. is, I doubt not, an extraordinary work of art; but placed as it is, the effect upon my feelings was that of a proof of the infinite superiority of real to pictured scenery; and the burst of splendour poured in at the windows almost entirely extinguished to my eye the magic lights of Barrett's pencil. I could not help wishing, that the cost bestowed upon this piece of painting had rather been devoted to some architectural ornaments out of doors; since the style of cultured beauty prevalent in Norbury-park would, in my opinion, admit with advantage a judicious intermixture of such decoration, though it cannot be said absolutely to require it. The only attempt at an edifice is a thatched plaster building with green window shutters, the appearance of which, in one of the most commanding sites of the park, is, in my judgment, wholly incongruous. And there is nothing in which the modern English taste seems to me so faulty, as in the custom of placing mean and rustic buildings in the midst of scenes certainly not intended to convey the idea of the absence of art and expense. This *love of simplicity* has, in various other particulars, injured our national taste; and has produced incongruities in our style of poetry and oratory, as well as in our external decorations.

I have already mentioned Box-hill as the other great feature of the vale I am describing. It is indeed the most striking object of this part of the country, and best known as a popular curiosity. It comprehends a considerable space, being composed of three or four smooth green ridges, separated from each other by narrow dells, and uniting at the summit into one lofty wooded top. On the side facing the vale of Leatherhead, its descent is not much short of perpendicular, forming a kind of chalky crag, naked and crumbling where not bound by the box trees and other shrubs, which in most parts give it a rich and thick covering. Its foot is bathed in the Mole, abruptly terminating its declivity, and giving it a fringe of aquatic trees and verdant meadows. Its peculiarity arises from its resemblance to the bold broken crags of mountainous countries; which, however, it only holds on this side; for where it bends round to join the Ryegate ridge of chalk hills, it puts on the same rotundity of form with the rest. Its crest affords a walk uncommonly striking; winding through the plantations of box, and at the openings affording bird's eye views of all the charms, as well as of the Leatherhead Vale, as of that much longer one in which the former terminates. It is difficult to determine whether this romantic hill produces a greater effect as an object from the subjacent vale, or as a station for a prospect. The point of view whence the hill itself is the most striking spectacle, is from the very elegant cottage and grounds of Mr. Barclay, seated directly beneath it. The vast perpendicular wall of verdure, forming a side-skreen to those grounds, has an effect of real sublimity as well as uncommon beauty; and a similar happy circumstance is perhaps scarcely to be met with in any other ornamental scene. The waters of the Mole are commonly said to sink into the ground under Box-hill. No interruption of the stream, however is to be observed at the foot of the hill itself; though after it has passed Burford bridge, in its course through Norbury-park, there are several such interruptions.

The map of Surrey will show a remarkable ridge running across the county, quite from the border of Hampshire to Kent, near the centre of which the town of Dorking is situated. This is a range of chalk or limestone hills, the general nature and appearance of which I have already described. From Dorking it may be seen running on one hand to the neighbourhood of Guilford, on the other beyond Ryegate. This ridge forms one side or wall of a long valley. It is for the most part naked, and of steep ascent; broken into a chain of separate rounded eminences, and here and there displaying the nature of its soil by chalk pits, which have been opened in different parts of it. The other side of the valley is much less distinctly marked, consisting of scattered eminences, approaching or receding, mostly clothed with wood, and by their breaks affording frequent openings into the southern parts of Surrey. The vale, however, is, upon the whole, sufficiently marked by the streams which run along it, and which are, the Mole, coming from the neighbourhood of Ryegate, and turning short round the foot of Box-hill; Pitt-brook, flowing from the west under Dorking, and at length terminating in the Mole; and another brook which flows in a contrary direction towards Guilford. These brooks are enlivened by a number of mills; and a tract of verdant meadows accompanies their course.

The continuation of Box hill towards Ryegate consists of naked round eminences, the sterile appearance of which serves as a striking contrast to the richness of the vale below. The first object immediately beneath them is Beachworth castle and park, now the property of ——— Peters, Esq. This is an ancient seat, chiefly remarkable for the noble timber belonging to it. Approaching it from Dorking, the road leads through an outer park, skirted with rows of old chesnut trees, of large dimensions, and of forms which perhaps a painter would rather denominate grotesque than picturesque. The peculiar manner in which this tree sends off its branches, making elbows and sharp angles, and often crossing each other in the most irregular lines, gives it a very singular character: but, on the whole, the chesnuts of Beachworth impress the beholder with extraordinary ideas of gigantic greatness. The inner park, at the extremity of which the house is situated, has two fine avenues, the one of elm trees, the other of limes, the tallest I ever beheld. This last is a triple avenue, resembling the nave of a cathedral, but greatly surpassing in grandeur the works of human hands. The trees touch each other with their branches, forming on the outside a vast screen, or wall of verdure. Within, the branches, meeting at a great height in the air from the opposite sides of the rows, form Gothic arches, and exclude every ray of the meridian sun. I never felt a stronger impression of awful gloom than on entering these solemn walks in the dusk of evening. The river Mole, washing the edge of Beachworth park, has in some parts a respectable breadth, and is beautifully shaded with aquatic trees and bushes.

A very little to the south of Beachworth park lies Chart, the pleasing seat and grounds of Mrs. Cornwall. The former inhabitant was Abraham Tucker, Esq. well known for his acute metaphysical writings, under the name of Search. Chart park is of no great extent; but the ground in it is strikingly varied in its surface, and has been planted with great taste. Its steep summits are crowned with trees of various kinds. The house, a plain white building, lies low. Close behind it the ground rises abruptly to a terrace, planted with a line of beeches, and affording fine views of the adjacent country. Some remarkably large plane trees decorate the slope; and on one hand is a rookery on the top of some lofty pines. Mrs. Cornwall cultivates many curious plants, and her shrubbery is furnished with some beautiful exotics in high perfection. Joining to Chart park, on the side of Dorking, are the elegant woods and grounds of the house of Lady Burrell, a large modern brick edifice, which forms a conspicuous object in the views of that town. The series of irregular heights which compose the southern side of the vale formerly mentioned, next leads to an eminence marked by a clump of firs, and commonly called Dorking's Glory. This is a very happy station for a prospect, commanding not only the vales of Leatherhead and Dorking, but a long tract of the southern part of Surrey, extending to the borders of Sussex. Passing westwards, behind the town of Dorking, the chain of elevated ground leads to Berry hill, a seat belonging to Lord Grimston, now in the occupancy of George Shum, Esq. A low ridge of hill, loosely planted with wood, terminates in a thick dark fir plantation, just behind which, fronting the south, stands the house. This is an edifice of more show and architectural pretention than those of the other seats in the neighbourhood; and by the complete shelter it receives from the north and east, and its exposure to a southern sun, must enjoy a full share of all the warmth this climate can boast. Before it is a handsome piece of water, artificially made at great cost; and beyond, the view terminates in some bold eminences crowned with fir and larch. The character of this seat is elegance united with the true English charm of snugness. It seems rather calculated for the enjoyment of the owner, than the gaze of the spectator.

About a mile westward from hence, on the lower Guilford road, is the Rookery, the villa of Richard Fuller, Esq. This delightful place occupies one of those dells which descend from the south into the long vale we have above described, each serving as the bed of a little stream. The imagination can scarcely conceive a scene of the kind more complete than this. The dell, at a distance, appears like a break or chasm between two hills, entirely filled with wood. On entering it, however, there is found to be room for a sweet verdant meadow, containing a stream which descends in several little falls (rather too artificial) and turns a mill near the house. The house itself, a plain white building in a kind of antique style of architecture, stands upon a sloping bank, having directly opposite to it a bold eminence finely planted with trees, and subsiding in a green lawn. The stream, now widened, runs between; and, a little higher, expands into an extensive pool, shaded on all sides with trees and shrubs to the water's edge, and winding out of sight. A narrow strip of green lawn bordering the water, spreading at length into a small meadow, forms all the rest of the grounds which is not occupied with wood. Plantations of beeches and other tall timber trees fill the remaining space, insulating (as it were) the whole with a belt of forest scenery, and securing to it a character of coolness and sequestered retreat, which no other place that I have seen possesses in an equal degree. The hottest and most sunny season of the year seems the time for enjoying this place to full advantage. In dark and chilly weather, it must probably appear to super-abound with shade and moisture; yet the site of the house is tolerably cheerful and open.

A little to the south-west of the Rookery, another dell descends in the same direction, called by the appropriate name of Valley Lonesome. This is occupied by the house and grounds of Mr. Haynes, and presents a scene considerably different from any yet described. The house, an elegant piece of architecture, appears, by a *jet d'eau* playing in front, with two equidistant bridges, and various ornamental appendages, disposed with perfect correspondence and regularity, to have been planned before the modern taste of rural decoration took place. The stream flowing through the valley is made to put on a variety of forms in basins, falls, channels, &c. which are rather trifling; but a cascade, really of some effect, bursts out from a high bank which borders the vale, though the steps or ledges down which the water is made to fall, and the round stone basin which at last receives it, give it too formal an appearance. The general character of Valley Lonesome is gay and cheerful notwithstanding its sequestered situation. Its upper end terminates in that wild tract, which, at length becoming a black naked moor, rises into the celebrated Leith Hill. The ascent on this side is very gentle; and the elevation would scarcely be suspected, were it not for the very extensive prospect that bursts on the sight at the further extremity. A tower, now in a ruinous state, marks the spot most favourable for the view. The southern part of Surrey, and a vast reach into Kent and Sussex, particularly the latter county, bounded by the line of elevated downs, compose the field of this extensive prospect, which is rather striking from its extent alone, than from any peculiar beauty or singularity of the detached parts. A flat and tolerably wooded country reaches to the downs; which last afford a wavy horizon, broken in some places by gaps; through one of which the sea, near Shoreham, may in clear weather be discerned by the aid of a glass. In a line with Leith hill are other high moors, stretching away to the western side of Surrey. Returning from Leith hill, a long and singular avenue of firs, planted in small clumps at regular distances, leads to the main valley we have left, by the back of the noble woods and plantations surrounding the seat of Sir Frederick Evelyn at Watton. The seat itself is an ordinary house, strangely placed in a bottom; but few mansions can boast of such an imposing accompaniment of lofty groves and thick woods, filling and characterising a large tract of land.

In order to bring our tour round Dorking within moderate compass, we will now take our course from Sir Frederick's straight to the chalky ridge we have so long left; and ascending it, proceed over Ranmer common to Denbeighs, the seat of Mr. Denison, impending over the town of Dorking, to which it affords one of its most conspicuous objects. This house was built by Mr. Tyers, first proprietor of Vauxhall, who transported to it many of the ideas of his public gardens, dark walks, temples, theatrical deceptions, ruins, monuments, and the like. These have been mostly removed, or suffered to go to decay; but there remains on one side of the house a fine green terrace, backed with trees; and on the other a close plantation of considerable extent, crowning the verge of the hill. Though taste has done much less for this place than for Norbury park, yet it may be questioned, whether its site be not equally advantageous, and the prospect it commands equally striking, with respect to variety and beauty. Almost all the places we have been describing lie within its view; to which may be added the town of Dorking, and all the lesser charms of the subjacent valley. Its descent to Dorking is very steep; and the road passes by some extensive chalk-pits, which are continually wrought, and furnish a lime in great esteem for its property of hardening under water.

It would be easy to enlarge the list of beautiful scenes in this neighbourhood, all within the reach of a morning's walk or ride, and affording a source of daily variety for several weeks. The purity of the air, the fragrance from an exuberance of aromatic plants and shrubs, the music from numberless birds, the choice of sheltered or open country, the liberty of wandering without obstacle or question through the most cultured scenes, and the perfect repose which reigns all around, unite to render this tract of country one of the most delightful to the contemplative man, and the most salutary to the invalid, that I have ever visited.

(D. p. 134.)

BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

LATE DR. PULTENEY.

RICHARD PULTENEY, M.D. F.R.S. L. and E. was born in the year 1730, at Loughborough, in Leicestershire. His parents had thirteen children, of whom he alone arrived at the age of maturity. From early youth he was of a delicate habit, and supposed to be inclined to a consumption; and it was by means of rigid temperance, which he observed during his whole life, that he maintained himself in a tolerable state of health. He has recorded (in Mr. Nichols's *History of Leicestershire,*) his obligations to his uncle, Mr. George Tomlinson, of Hathern, who possessed some property in that village, and adorned an obscure station with virtue and science. "Those (says Dr. Pulteney) who remember and intimately knew the subject of this memoir, will not, it is believed, judge it otherwise than impartial, though, confessedly, a tribute from his nearest relative, one who reveres his memory with the truest affection, who, through the early stage of life, received from him, as from a father, the genuine dictates of wisdom, virtue, and religion; all of which were truly exemplified in his own conduct throughout the whole of his life." From this relation he imbibed his taste for botanical studies; and it was probably through his instigation that he was destined to the medical profession.

The youth's first situation in a professional capacity was that of apprentice to an apothecary in Loughborough; an humble school, which, however, his industry and talent for observation were able to render instructive. He passed through the usual course of a country education, and then complied with an invitation to settle at Leicester. That town, like most provincial capitals, was divided into two political and religious parties; and it was that of the dissenters (to which his parents belonged) whence Mr. Pulteney received his support. His sphere was still further narrowed, by the limitation of practising only as an apothecary; for it was thought due to the consequence of the party, to possess a surgeon of their own as a separate professional character, which office was filled by Mr. Cogan, a man of merit and agreeable manners.

Few remarks can be necessary on the hardship of placing persons of abilities and liberal sentiments in situations so unfavourable to the acquirement of that reputation and those emoluments which are justly due to professional superiority; and in which they must be reduced to an unworthy and degrading dependence upon a few party-leaders.

Mr. Pulteney was of a timid and cautious disposition; and, though his mind was by no means formed for shackles, his temper was not firm enough to enable him effectually to assert his freedom. It would be an unpleasant task to dwell upon the share he had in those "scorns which patient merit of the unworthy takes;" or of the struggle he maintained with narrow circumstances, which obliged him to contract habits of rigid œconomy rendered more necessary by the passion for buying books, to which he was content to sacrifice every other inclination. Science was, indeed, his great resource under the discouragements of his situation, and it eventually proved the means of raising him from obscurity. To his private friends he was known as one who had inquired largely and thought freely on a variety of topics. To the public he first appeared as a votary of the pleasing study of botany. He became a correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* at an early period; and communicated to it, anonymously, a series of valuable letters concerning the poisonous plants of this country, and a dissertation on Fungi, contained in the xxvth volume of that miscellany. To the same publication he sent, in 1757, a translation of a curious paper in the Upsal *Amœnitates Academicæ* on "the Sleep of Plants." This subject he pursued more at large in a paper inserted in the fiftieth volume of the *Philosophical Transactions*, for 1758, entitled "Observations on the Sleep of Plants, with an enumeration of several Plants which are subject to that Law." He had before appeared among the contributors to the *Philosophical Transactions* by a "Catalogue of the rare Plants of Leicestershire, with Botanical and Medical Observations;" vol. xlix. for 1756. This paper he gave to Mr. Nichols, in an improved state, in 1795, who has inserted it in the first volume of his history of that county. In 1758 he printed, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a translation from the same Amœnitates, of the instructive paper entitled "Pan Suecus," giving a catalogue of plants which, from experiment, were found to be either chosen or rejected as food by the different species of domestic quadrupeds. This he adapted more particularly to English readers by referring to English authors; and he subjoined to it some notes and observations. Its utility caused him afterwards to annex it, in a more enlarged form, to his "View of the Writings of Linnæus."

He distinguished himself in a manner more purely professional by a paper published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. lii. for 1761, giving an account of a singular medical case attended with palpitation of the heart and other uncommon symptoms, and which, upon dissection, exhibited a preternatural enlargement of that organ. In 1762, he received the honour of being elected a fellow of the Royal Society. His name was now associated to those of men of science in various departments; and his personal merits were becoming known to a wider circle of acquaintance, to whom he was endeared by his modest worth, and the good sense and discretion which peculiarly characterised him. Nor can it be doubted, that, even with his original disadvantages of situation, he would have attained a respectable share of business at Leicester, though still in that inferior branch of the profession on which he had at first entered, to which, however, he had added the practice of midwifery. But it was his lot to possess a friend whose ardent and enterprising spirit was an admirable corrective of his own diffidence, and who esteemed him too much to acquiesce in his continuing in a rank and employment beneath his merits. This was Mr. Maxwell Garthshore, then eminent in medical practice at Uppingham, in Rutlandshire. By means of a common friend, much revered by both, they were made acquainted in the year 1758, and this acquaintance soon ripened into a warmth of friendship which death alone could extinguish. As it was, Mr. Garthshare's own plan, after a residence for some years at Uppingham, to take the degree of doctor at Edinburgh, where he had received his medical education, he strongly urged Mr. Pulteney to accompany him thither, and offer himself to the examinations of the university, though he had never enjoyed the advantage of academical instruction there or elsewhere. His reluctance was at length overcome; and the two friends set out upon their expedition in the spring of 1764. Mr. Pulteney was already known by reputation at Edinburgh, particularly to Dr. Hope, the professor of Botany; and he had the benefit of his companion's extensive connections in the place. He passed through all the necessary preliminaries with credit, and in May received the honours of graduation. The subject of his inaugural dissertation was "De Cinchona," or, On the Peruvian Bark; of the natural and medical history of which important article he gave a very satisfactory and instructive account. The botanical description is particularly accurate, and is illustrated by a plate; and his Thesis has been thought worthy of re-printing in a collection of the most valuable compositions of the kind which the medical school of Edinburgh has produced.

A circumstance relative to his graduation, honourable to himself, but affording matter of reflection relative to the conduct of public bodies, ought not to be passed over in silence. The university of Edinburgh had now for a considerable time been rising in reputation as a school of medicine, and its degrees in that faculty became of course more and more respectable. It is well known that the universities of Scotland, modelled upon those of the continent, have adopted the practice of conferring degrees upon examination, without requiring in the candidates a previous residence in their own seminary, or, indeed, in any other. In some of them the examination itself has been dispensed with, and the requested distinction has been bestowed upon persons at a distance, in consequence of mere recommendation. It is no wonder that such a laxity should have thrown occasional discredit upon academical honours; nor that the public should have been prone to confound the degrees conferred at universities similarly constituted, in one general note of disesteem. The Edinburgh medical students justly considered themselves entitled to be regarded among those of the profession who had received the greatest advantages of education, and were the most deserving of those testimonials of competency which titular distinctions imply. They had therefore begun to remonstrate against a mode of conferring degrees which might confound them with persons altogether unworthy of the honour; and their discontent had been aggravated by some late instances of notorious incapacity in Edinburgh doctors by favour. Thinking their complaints not sufficiently attended to, some of the students of the longest standing had entered into a mutual engagement publicly to oppose every future attempt at decorating with the degree of doctor of physic at Edinburgh any person who should not have studied there, and to take their own degrees elsewhere in case their opposition should prove unsuccessful.

It happened that Mr. Pulteney was the first candidate under these circumstances, after this resolution was adopted. The subscribers handsomely expressed to him their concern that a person of his acknowledged merit should be the object of their opposition; but they adhered to their determination. His reputation and interest carried him through the contest; but he was (I believe) the last in favour of whom the condition of studying at that individual seminary has been violated. And so sensible have the Edinburgh professors since become, that augmenting the credit of their university's degrees, and the difficulty of obtaining them, was conducive to their own personal emolument, that they have extended the period of requisite study there from two to three years, and made it comprehend every set of lectures which can possibly be construed as belonging to a complete medical course!

As Dr. Pulteney had now assumed a new rank in the profession, it was advisable that he should look out for a new situation. The first plan which suggested itself to his London friends, was to procure him an introduction to the celebrated earl of Bath, then in a very declining state of health. This was effected; and the earl, upon inspection of his pedigree, recognised his descent from the ancient family of which his own was a branch. He also, upon conversing with him, was so favourably impressed with his professional and literary merits, that he resolved to attach him to himself in the character of domestic physician. He proposed to settle upon him an appointment of 400*l.* per annum; and the connection would probably have been attended with mutual satisfaction and advantage, had not the death of the earl followed so speedily that Dr. Pulteney received only one quarterly advance of his intended salary.

Not long after this event, a medical vacancy happening at Blandford, in Dorsetshire, he was urged by Dr. Watson, Dr. Baker, and others of his friends, to go down and occupy it. Provided with their warm recommendations, but an utter stranger to all the inhabitants of the town and its vicinity, he fixed his abode in that spot which was to be his residence during the whole remainder of his life. A small country town, in the midst of a neighbourhood composed of the usual ingredients of provincial society, was not, perhaps, exactly the situation most desirable to a man whose mind was enlarged by free speculation and scientific pursuit: but it was now Dr. Pulteney's business to establish himself in his professon; and to that object, prudence required that sacrifices should be made. This is, indeed, the condition of all who have their way to make in the world; and perhaps a just sense of true dignity of character, as well as regard to pecuniary advantage, should lead a man to place before him, as his *primary object,* the attainment of success in the profession which he has chosen; and to consider as secondary and subordinate all reputation or gratification derived from other sources. Dr. Pulteney, therefore, seems to have sat down with the resolution, not only of fulfilling his medical duties with the utmost punctuality, but of avoiding every thing which might in the least degree involve him in differences with those on whose good opinion he was to depend. He was sensible that by his removal he had entirely *changed his latitude*; and though he was not a man to shift his sentiments and language according to his company, yet he was constitutionally cautious, and could, without much effort, practise the allowable policy of silence. "Commune with thy heart and be still," was the maxim of 36 years of his life. That it exerted its natural influence upon his character, will not be denied; but it did not prevent him from being a very amiable, useful, and respectable member of society.

The situation of Blandford had not hitherto afforded any great scope for medical practice; but Dr. Pulteney soon extended its limits. His reputation spread through the circumjacent country, and he received professional calls from the market and trading towns in a compass of twenty or thirty miles round his centre, as well as from many of the country families of principal distinction in that part of the kingdom. As his industry was great, and his expenses were moderate, he began to accumulate property. He continued to live in a state of celibacy till October 1779, when he married Miss Elizabeth Galton, of Blandford. He could not have chosen more fortunately for domestic happiness; and the addition this connection made to his comforts was proportionable to the want he had previously felt of that society which alone can interest the heart. No children were the fruit of this union; but in the additional society of an amiable young relation of Mrs. Pulteney he enjoyed the pleasure of an adoptive parent.

He continued to employ his leisure in occasional writings on topics of medicine and natural history. In 1772 he addressed a letter to his friend Dr. Watson (published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, vol. lxii.) concerning the medicinal effects of the *Œnanthe crocata*, an unbelliferous plant of a poisonous nature, the juice of which was exhibited, by mistake, instead of that of the water-parsnep. In the lxviiith volume of the same collection, for 1778, he gave an accurate account of the bills of mortality for the parish of Blandford during forty years past, with observations. To the *London Medical Journal*, vol. v. he communicated an account of the poisonous effects of the Hemlock Dropwort (the *Œnanthe crocata* above mentioned.)

He had hitherto appeared as an author only in detached memoirs inserted in periodical publications. But in 1781 he ventured to offer to the public a separate volume, on a subject, indeed, with which no man could claim a more intimate acquaintance. This was "A General View of the Writings of Linnæus," 8vo. The purpose of this work was to afford an exact synopsis of all the labours of the great Swedish naturalist, who appears to have been the object of his warmest admiration. Along with the account of his works, memoirs of his life are interwoven, chiefly extracted from the different writings of Linnæus. In the prefatory advertisement Dr. Pulteney speaks with great modesty of his performance, which, however, was very well received by the friends of natural history, and obtained for him the present of a medal from Stockholm, as an acknowledgment of the justice he had done to the fame of the illustrious Swede. Many judicious observations and valuable points of information are interspersed in the work. It concludes with a synoptical account of all the papers contained in the first seven volumes of the *Amœnitates Academicæ*.

Some years afterwards a more extensive and original work proceeded from Dr. Pulteney's pen, and which must have cost him much varied research in its composition. This was his "Historical and Biographical Sketches of the Progress of Botany in England, from its Origin to the Introduction of the Linnæan System;" 2 vols. 8vo. 1790. He paid a just tribute to scientific merit in dedicating the first volume of this performance to Sir Joseph Banks; and a grateful return to long friendship, in inscribing the second to Sir George Baker and Dr. Garthshore. The work itself is highly valuable, as an example of that union of the history of men with that of an object of their common pursuit, which is so peculiarly interesting and instructive. It has likewise made an addition to national biography, which will be duly prized by those who are attached to their country's reputation. It is marked throughout with that candour and disposition to commend which always characterised the amiable author.

Whilst he was thus tracing the progress of his favourite science in books, he was by no means inattentive to the volume of nature as it lay displayed before him. The county in which he resided is considerably furnished with objects worthy the notice of the naturalist, especially in the fossil kingdom. How well he had made himself acquainted with these treasures, the present writer obtained a proof, which laid him under a particular obligation. This was a brief but masterly account of the products of Dorsetshire, communicated to him for the use of his little work, entitled "England Delineated." He afterwards enriched the second edition of Mr. Hutchins's "History of Dorsetshire" with a catalogue of the birds, shells, and plants observed in that county; and during his last illness he had under revisal a plate of Dorsetshire fossils communicated by himself. The formation of a musæum was the amusement of many years of his life. By gradual additions, he accumulated a store of natural productions in various classes, which was to him a perpetual source of pleasing contemplation, and will, doubtless, become to many students of nature a means of instruction, in the possession of the Linnæan Society, to which it was bequeathed.

Dr. Pulteney, in his latter years, frequently expressed a wish to retire from business, and take up his residence in the metropolis, for the sake of the scientific advantages with which it is so amply furnished; but his habits of life were become too strong to permit him to resolve upon so great a change. He continued, though with diminished ardour, to follow his professional avocations, till he was attacked with a pleuritic complaint, which, after great sufferings, put a period to his existence on October 13th, 1801, at the age of 71.

By his last will he gave a signal proof of the deep impression which his early friendships had made upon his mind, and which no subsequent connections of common acquaintance could obliterate or equal. After a handsome provision for those who on every account were entitled to the first place in his remembrance, the remaining objects of his liberality were some of the friends of his early days, and even the sons of those friends. He likewise paid a due attention to the claims of charity by bequests to the Salisbury, Leicester, and Edinburgh infirmaries, and to the poor of the parish of Blandford; and he displayed his regard to science by similar bounties to the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh, and to the Linnæan Society.

Such are the brief memoirs which I have been able to collect concerning Dr. Pulteney; whose life affords, indeed, but little biographical variety, but presents an encouraging picture of modest merit gradually making its way to success, and science even of the most retired kind, becoming the passport to public esteem and reputation.

(E. p. 137.)

MEMOIR

OF

GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B. A.

LITERATURE has sustained a severe loss by the death of Gilbert Wakefield, B. A., carried off by a fever, in the 46th year of his age, to the unspeakable regret of his family and friends. A person in various respects so distinguished, is a proper subject for the contemplation of survivors; and he had deserved too well of the public not to be entitled to honourable and affectionate commemoration.

Mr. Wakefield, in "Memoirs of his own Life," published in 1792, has informed the world of all the circumstances attending his education and passage through life down to that period, with a minuteness and frankness which render his work a very curious and entertaining piece of biography. I shall not make any transcripts from it, but confining myself to a slight sketch of the leading events, shall take that view of his character and conduct which suggests itself to the reflection of a friendly but not a prejudiced by-stander.

Gilbert Wakefield was born on February 22d, 1756, at Nottingham, of which town his father was one of the parochial clergy. An uncommon solidity and seriousness of disposition marked him from infancy, together with a power of application, and thirst after knowledge, which accelerated his progress in juvenile studies. In his grammatical course he passed under the tuition of several masters, the last and most respectable of whom was the Rev. Mr. Wooddeson, of Kingston-upon-Thames, to which parish his father had then moved. He was used, however, to lament that he had not possessed the advantages of an uniform education at one of those public schools, which undoubtedly, whatever may be their dangers and deficiencies, effect the point at which they exclusively aim, that of laying a solid foundation for classical erudition in its most exact form. In 1772, he was entered as a scholar of Jesus College, Cambridge; and it was ever a topic of thankfulness to him, that he became a member of *that* university in which the love of truth met with some encouragement from a spirit of liberal inquiry, rather than of *that* which was devoted either to supine indolence, or to the passive inculcation of opinions sanctioned by authority. During the first years, his attention was chiefly fixed upon classical studies, always his favourites; and he was excited only by emulation and academical requisitions to aim at that proficiency in mathematical knowledge which bears so high a value at Cambridge. Yet while he confesses himself destitute of a genuine taste for speculations of this kind, he scruples not to declare the infinite superiority, in point of grandeur and sublimity, of mathematical philosophy to classical lucubrations. In 1776, he took his degree of B. A. on which occasion he was nominated to the second place among seventy-five candidates; and soon after, he was elected to a fellowship of his college. In the same year he published a small collection of Latin poems, with a few critical notes on Homer, at the University press. If not highly excellent, they were sufficient to establish the claim of a young man to more than ordinary acquaintance with the elegancies of literature. He had already obtained a knowledge of the Hebrew language, as preparatory to those theological studies which now became his most serious occupation; and it may safely be affirmed that no man ever commenced them with a mind more determined upon the unbiassed search after truth, and the open assertion of it when discovered. The foundation which he laid for his inquiries was an accurate knowledge of the phraseology of the Scriptures, acquired by means of attention to the idiom in which they were written. As at this time some of his most esteemed academical friends manifested their dissatisfaction with the articles of the church of England by a conscientious refusal of subscription, it cannot be doubted that scruples on this point had already taken possession of his mind; and so far had his convictions proceeded, that he has stigmatised his compliance with the forms requisite for obtaining deacon's orders, which he received in 1778, as "the most disingenuous action of his whole life." If, indeed, he could receive consolation from the practice of others, there were several of his intimate associates, who, by a superiority to such scruples, have since risen to opulence and distinction in the church, without betraying any uneasiness for a similar acquiescence.

Mr. Wakefield left college after ordination, and engaged in a curacy at Stockport, in Cheshire, whence he afterwards removed to a similar situation in Liverpool. He performed the duties of his office with seriousness and punctuality; but his dissatisfaction with the doctrine and worship of the church continuing to increase, he probably considered his connection with it as not likely to be durable. The disgust he felt at what he saw of the practice of privateering, and the slave-trade, in the latter place of his residence, also awakened in his mind that humane interest in the rights and happiness of his fellow-creatures, which has made so conspicuous a part of his character. The American war did not tend to augment his attachment to the political administration of his country; in short, he became altogether unfit to make one of that body, the principal business of which, in the opinion of many, seems to be, acting as the satellites of existing authority, however exerted. His marriage, in 1779, to Miss Watson, niece of the rector of Stockport, was soon followed by an invitation to undertake the post of classical tutor at the dissenting academy at Warrington, with which he complied. That he was regarded as a very valuable acquisition to this institution,—that he was exemplary in the discharge of his duty, and equally gained the attachment of his pupils, and the friendship and esteem of his colleagues,—the writer of this account can from his own knowledge attest. Being now freed from all clerical shackles, he began his career as a theological controversialist, and, it must be confessed, with an acrimony of style which was lamented by his friends, and which laid him open to the reproach of his enemies. It is not here intended to vindicate what the writer himself cannot but disapprove; but the real and substantial kindness of Mr. Wakefield's temper, and the benevolence of his heart, were such, that this apparent contradiction must be solved by his warmth of zeal in what he thought the cause of truth, and perhaps by a familiarity with scholastic debates, which rendered him in some measure callous to the use, or rather abuse, of vituperative expressions from the press. In disputations by word of mouth, no man was more calm and gentle, more patient in hearing, or more placid in replying; and if, in his writings, he has without hesitation or delicacy bestowed his censures, he has been equally liberal and decided in his praise. His applauses evidently came from the heart, free and unstinted, for envy did not possess a single particle in his composition; nor has he withheld them when he thought them deserved by particular laudable qualities, even in characters which he could not regard with general approbation. No man, perhaps, ever more fully gave way to the openness of his disposition in speaking *the whole truth* concerning men and things, unmoved by common considerations; whence it is not to be wondered at, that he frequently rendered himself more obnoxious to antagonists than the case essentially required, and roused prejudices which a more guarded conduct would have left dormant. A sentence which, in his Memoirs, he has quoted from Asgill, expresses (as it was probably meant to do) the spirit with which he wrote. "A blunt author in pursuit of truth, *knows no man* after the flesh, till his chase is over. For a man to *think* what he *writes*, may bespeak his *prudence:* but to *write* what he *thinks*, best opens his principles."

We shall not in this sketch attempt to give an account of all his publications, many of them small in bulk and temporary in their application. The most important of his theological labours will be allowed to be those in which he employs his eminent erudition in the explanation of Scripture. Of these, the first was "A New Translation of the First Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to the Thessalonians," printed in 1781. It was followed in the next year by "A New Translation of St. Matthew, with Notes, critical, philological, and explanatory," 4to; a work which obtained much applause, and amply displayed the extent of his reading, and the facility with which his memory called up its reposited stores for the purpose of illustration or parallelism. At this time he likewise augmented his fund for Scripture interpretation by the acquisition of various Oriental dialects. After quitting Warrington, at the dissolution of the academy, he took up his residence successively at Bramcote in Nottinghamshire, at Richmond, and at Nottingham, upon the plan of taking a few pupils, and pursuing at his leisure those studies to which he became continually more attached. While in the first of these situations, he published the first volume of *An Inquiry into the*

Opinions of the Christian Writers of the three first Centuries concerning the Person of Jesus Christ, a learned and elaborate performance, but which did not meet with encouragement sufficient to induce him to proceed in the design. A painful disorder in his left shoulder, with which he was attacked in 1786, and which harassed him for two years, interrupted the course of his employments; and he could do no more for letters during that period, than alleviate his sufferings by drawing up some remarks upon the Georgics of Virgil and the Poems of Gray, which he published with editions of those delightful compositions. As his health returned, his theological pursuits were resumed, and he again engaged in the field of controversy. He also, in 1789, made a commencement of a work, which promised much, as well for his reputation, as for the advantage of sacred literature. It was *An Union of Theological and Classical Learning, illustrating the Scriptures by Light borrowed from the Philology of Greece and Rome.* Under the title of *Silva Critica* three parts of this performance have issued from the University press of Cambridge.

The formation of a dissenting college at Hackney, which it was hoped, by the powerful aid of the metropolis, would become both more considerable and more permanent than former institutions of a like kind, produced an invitation to Mr. Wakefield to undertake the classical professorship. With this he thought proper to comply; and accordingly, in 1790, he quitted his abode at Nottingham, and removed to Hackney, upon the plan of joining with public tuition the instruction of private pupils. He has himself informed the public that "both of these anchors failed him, and left his little bark again afloat on the ocean of life." It is neither necessary nor desirable to revive the memory of differences between persons really respectable and well-intentioned, but under the influence of different habits and views of things. We shall confine ourselves to a remark or two.

Mr. Wakefield was a person who derived his opinions entirely from the source of his own reason and reflection, and it will not be easy to name a man who stood more single and insulated in this respect throughout life than he. Although his principles had induced him to renounce his clerical office in the church of England, and he had become a *dissenter* from her doctrine and worship, yet he was far from uniting with any particular class of those who are usually denominated *dissenters.* He had an insuperable repugnance to their mode of performing divine service; and he held in no high estimation the theological and philosophical knowledge which it has been the principal object of their seminaries of education to communicate. It has already been observed, that the basis of his own divinity was philology. Classical literature, therefore, as containing the true rudiments of all other science, was that on which he thought the greatest stress should be laid, in a system of liberal education. This point he inculcated with an earnestness which probably appeared somewhat dictatorial to the conductors of the institution.

Further, in the progress of his speculations, he had been led to form notions concerning the expediency and propriety of public worship, extremely different from those of every body of Christians, whether in sects or establishments; and as he was incapable of thinking one thing and practising another, he had sufficiently made known his sentiments on this subject, as well in conversation, as by abstaining from attendance upon every place of religious assembly. They who were well acquainted with him, knew that in his own breast piety was one of the most predominant affections; but the assembling for social worship had for so many ages been regarded as the most powerful instrument for the support of general religion, that to discourage it was considered as of dangerous example, especially in a person engaged in the education of youth. Notwithstanding, therefore, his classical instructions in the college were received by the students almost with enthusiastical admiration, and conferred high credit on the institution, a dissolution of his connection with it took place in the summer of 1791.

The subsequent publication of his pamphlet on Public Worship deprived him (as he says) of the only two private pupils he expected. From that period he continued to reside at Hackney, in the capacity of a retired man of letters, employing his time partly in the education of his own children, partly in the composition of works which will perpetuate his name among those who have cultivated literature with most ardour and success. His *Translation of the New Testament, with Notes,* 3 vols. 8vo. appeared towards the close of 1791, and was very respectably patronised. In language it preserves as much as possible of the old version. Its numerous deviations from that in sense, will be regarded as happy alterations or bold innovations, according to the prepossessions of the reader. A long list might be given of his succeeding labours, but we shall only particularise some of the most considerable. He printed (no longer at the Cambridge press) two more parts of his *Silva Critica.* He gave a new edition, much corrected, of his *Translation of the New Testament;* and besides, proved his zeal for Christianity, by enlarging a former work *On the Evidences of the Christian Religion,* and by replying to Thomas Paine's attack upon it in his *Age of Reason.*

To the works of Pope, as our most cultivated English poet, and the most perfect example of that splendour and felicity of diction which is not attained without much study of the poetic art, Mr. Wakefield paid particular attention. It was his design to have published a complete edition of his works; but after he had printed the first volume, the scheme was rendered abortive by Dr. Warton's edition. He, however, printed a second volume, entitled *Notes on Pope,* and also gave a new edition of Pope's *Iliad and Odyssey.* In these publications he displayed all that variety of comparison and illustration, that power of tracing a poetical thought through different authors, with its successive shades and heightenings, and that exquisite feeling of particular beauties, which distinguish him as an annotator of the writers of Greece and Rome.

As a classical editor he appeared in a selection from the Greek tragedians, in editions of Horace, Virgil, Bion and Moschus, and finally, in his *Lucretius;* a vast performance, which alone might seem the labour of many industrious years. Of his character as a man of letters, I have been favoured with the following estimate by an able judge, the Rev. E. Cogan of Cheshunt:

"In extent of erudition, particularly if an acquaintance with the oriental languages be taken into the account, he was perhaps inferior to no man of the present age; and they who have been considered as having had the advantage over him in some of the less important *minutiæ* of Greek literature, have probably limited their attention to fewer objects, and certainly commenced their literary course with a more advantageous preparation. In conjectural criticism he exhibits much of the character of Bentley and Markland: men whom he esteemed according to their high deserts in that species of learning to which his own mind was peculiarly directed. Like these illustrious scholars, he is always learned, sometimes bold, and frequently happy. Like them, he had a mind which disdained to be held in a servile subjection to authority; and in defiance of established readings, which too often substitute the dreams of transcribers for the gems of antiquity, he followed, without fear, wherever reason and probability seemed to lead the way. In his earlier critical works, he exhibited, amidst some errors which his riper judgment discarded, the promise of his future greatness: and even his faults were the infirmities of genius; they flowed from that ardour and enthusiasm which cannot always wait for the slow decisions of cool inquiry. They were faults which, though they afforded a small consolation to dull malignity, did not diminish his praise in the estimation of one solid and impartial judge. His favourite study was poetry, and in an extensive acquaintance with the ancient poets, both Greek and Roman, few men since the revival of letters have equalled him, and no one ever surpassed him in the perception of their beauties. When he applies to them the hand of conjecture, he rarely fails to give new spirit and animation by his touch; and where we are obliged to dissent from his corrections, we are sometimes sorry for the credit of the poet that he does not appear to have written what the critic has suggested. He was peculiarly fond of tracing an elegance of poetical expression through the various modifications which it assumed in the hands of different writers, and in the illustration of ancient phraseology he did not overlook the poets of his own country, with many of which he was very familiar. His great work is undoubtedly his edition of *Lucretius*, a work which ignorance may despise, at which malice may carp, and hireling scriblers may rail, but which will rank with the labours of Heinsius, Gronovius, Burman, and Heyne, as long as literature itself shall live. It will share the prediction with which Ovid has graced the memory of the great poet himself:

> Carmina sublimis tunc sunt peritura Lucretî,
> Exitio terras cum dabit una dies.

"Besides its critical merit, it exhibits the richest display of the flowers of poetry that ever was presented to the world, and will amply reward the perusal of every man who has sensibility to relish the finest touches of human genius.

"Mr. Wakefield, even before this immortal specimen of his talents, was deservedly held in the highest estimation by the literati of Germany; and if his honours at home have not equalled his reputation abroad, the candid mind will easily find the explanation of this phenomenon in the violence of political party, and the mean jealousy which has too often disgraced the scholars of Great Britain. The name of Bentley is connected with proof enough of the justice of this insinuation."

I shall now proceed to an incident of his life which will be viewed with regret by the ingenuous of all parties: the *additional* sensations it inspires will, of course, be different according to the particular sentiments of individuals. It has already been hinted that Mr. Wakefield, from the time of his residence at Liverpool, had begun to imbibe a detestation of that policy which trampled upon the rights of mankind, and was founded upon unfeeling avarice and unprincipled ambition. His study of Christianity more and more convinced him that the maxims of the world and those of religion were in direct opposition; and, in common with many other excellent and learned men, he became persuaded of the absolute incompatibility of war with the christian character. He had moreover received those principles of the origin and end of government, which, however they may now be regarded, were once thought fundamental to the British constitution, and the basis of all civil liberty. He had occasionally, in the political contests of his country, publicly expressed his opinions upon these subjects; but the French revolution was an event calculated to call forth all his ardour in the cause. His sanguine temper led him to consider it as the undoubted commencement of a better order of things, in which rational liberty, equitable policy, and pure religion would finally become triumphant. He watched its progress with incredible interest, excused its unhappy deviations, and abhorred the combination of arbitrary power which threatened its destruction. It was impossible that he should refrain from employing his pen on the occasion, or that he should do it with a "cold and unperforming hand." In his *Remarks on the General Orders of the Duke of York*, he had arraigned the justice of the war with France in terms which are supposed to have exercised the utmost forbearance of the Ministry. But in his "Reply to some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's Address," he passed those limits. From that systematic progress in restraining the free communication of political opinions which may be traced in the acts of the late Ministry, it is not unreasonable to conclude, that a victim to the liberty of the press, of name and character sufficient to inspire a wide alarm, was really desired. Yet, as the attorney general solemnly protested that his prosecution of this pamphlet was spontaneous, and solely dictated to him by the heinous and dangerous nature of its contents, it would be uncandid to call his assertion in question. A man of sense, however, may be allowed to smile at the notion of real danger to supreme power, supported as well by public opinion, as by every active energy of the state, from a private writer, arguing upon principles so little applicable to the practice of the world, as those of the Gospel. Further, a man of a truly liberal and generous mind will perhaps view, not without indignation, the thunders of the law hurled upon a head distinguished for virtue and learning, without any humane allowance for well intentioned, if misguided, zeal. The attack commenced, not against the principal, who boldly and honestly came forward to avow himself, but against the agents; and the grand purport of it was sufficiently declared by the superior severity with which a bookseller was treated, who was not the editor, but only a casual vender of the work; but who had long been obnoxious as a distinguished publisher of books of free inquiry. Mr. Wakefield himself next underwent prosecution; and his sentence, upon conviction, was a two years' imprisonment in Dorchester gaol. There exists no other *measure* of punishment in such a case than comparison, and perhaps, upon the application of this rule, it will not be found inordinately severe. Two years' abode in a prison is, however, a most serious infliction! it is cutting off so much from desirable existence. Mr. Wakefield, notwithstanding his natural fortitude, felt it as such. Though, from his habits of sobriety and seclusion, he had little to resign in respect of the ordinary pleasures of the world; his habits of pedestrian exercise, and his enjoyment of family comfort, were essentially infringed by confinement. He likewise found all his plans of study so deranged, by the want of his library, and the many incommodities of his situation, that he was less able to employ that resource against tedium and melancholy than might have been expected. One powerful consolation, however, in addition to that of a good conscience, attended him. A set of warm and generous friends employed themselves in raising a contribution which should not only indemnify him from any pecuniary loss consequent upon his prosecution, but should alleviate his cares for the future support of his family. The purpose was effected;

and it is to be hoped that Englishmen will ever retain spirit enough to take under their protection men who have faithfully, though perhaps not with due prudence and consideration, maintained the noble cause of mankind against the frowns of authority.

At length the tedious period elapsed, and the last day of May, 1801, restored him to liberty. He was received by his friends, many of whom had visited him in prison, with the most cordial welcome. He was endeared to them by his sufferings, and his character was generally thought to have received a meliorating tinge of mildness and moderation from the reflection which had passed through his mind. He formed extensive plans for future literary labours, and he seemed fully capable of enjoying and benefiting that world to which he was returned. When—Oh, what is man!—a fever, probably occasioned by his anxious exertions to fix himself in a new habitation, cut short all his prospects. From the first attack he persuaded himself that the termination would be fatal, and this conviction materially opposed every attempt of medicine in his favour. He surveyed death without terror, and prepared for it by tender offices to the survivors. The event took place on September the 9th.

It is presumed that the character of Mr. Wakefield is sufficiently developed in the preceding sketch of his life. It may, however, be added, that there was in him an openness, a simplicity, a good faith, an affectionate ardour, a noble elevation of soul, which irresistibly made way to the hearts of all who nearly approached him, and rendered him the object of friendly attachment, to a degree almost unexampled. Let this be placed in balance against all that might appear arrogant or self-sufficient, harsh, or irritable, in his literary conduct! His talents were rare—his morals pure—his views exalted—his courage invincible—his integrity without a spot. When will the place of such a man be supplied!

(F. p. 142.)

MEMOIR
OF
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L. D. F.R.S.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D. F.R.S. and member of many foreign literary societies, was born on March 13th, old style, 1733, at Field-head, in the parish of Birstall, in the West-riding of Yorkshire. His father was engaged in the clothing manufacture, and both parents were persons of respectability among the Calvinistic Dissenters. Joseph was from an early period brought up in the house of Mr. Joseph Keighley, who had married his aunt. A fondness for reading was one of the first passions he displayed; and it probably induced his friends to change their intentions of educating him for trade, and destine him for a learned profession. He was sent to a school at Batley, the master of which possessed no common share of erudition. Besides the Latin and Greek languages, he was capable of giving instructions in the Hebrew; and his pupil carried with him the knowledge of all the three to the academy of Daventry; at which he was entered, in his 19th year, as a student of divinity. This academy was the successor of that kept by Dr. Dodridge at Northampton, and was conducted by Dr. Ashworth, whose first pupil Mr. Priestley is said to have been. When about the age of twenty-two, he was chosen as an assistant minister to the Independent congregation of Needham-market in Suffolk. He had at this time begun to imbibe theological opinions different from those of the school in which he had been educated. He had likewise become a student and admirer of the metaphysical philosophy of Hartley, of which, during life, he was the zealous advocate and the acute elucidator.

After an abode of three years at Needham, he accepted an invitation to be pastor of a small flock at Namptwich in Cheshire. There he opened a day-school, in the conduct of which he exhibited that turn for ingenious research, and that spirit of improvement, which were to be his distinguishing characteristics. He enlarged the minds of his pupils by philosophical experiments, and he drew up an English Grammar upon an improved plan, which was his earliest publication. His reputation as a man of uncommon talents and active inquiry soon extended itself among his professional brethren; and when, upon the death of the Rev. Dr. Taylor, the tutor in divinity at Warrington academy, Dr. Aikin was chosen to supply his place, Mr. Priestley was invited to undertake the vacant department of belles-lettres. It was in 1761 that he removed to a situation happily accommodated to his personal improvement, by the free society of men of large intellectual attainments, and to the display of his own various powers of mind. He soon after made a matrimonial connection with Mary, daughter to Mr. Wilkinson of Bersham Foundry, near Wrexham; a lady of an excellent heart, and a strong understanding, and his faithful partner in all the vicissitudes of his life.

At Warrington properly commenced the literary career of this eminent person, and a variety of publications soon announced to the world the extent and originality of his pursuits. One of the first was a Chart of Biography, in which he ingeniously contrived to present an ocular image both of the proportional duration of existence, and of the chronological period and synchronism of all the most eminent persons of all ages and countries, in the great departments of science, art, and public life. This was very favourably received, and suggested a second chart, of History, in like manner offering to the view the extent, time, and duration of states and empires. Subjects of history and general politics at this time engaged much of his attention. He delivered lectures upon them, of which the substance was given to the world in various useful publications. His notions of government were founded on those principles of the original and indefeasible rights of man, which are the sole basis of all political freedom. He was an ardent admirer of the British Constitution, according to his conceptions of it, and ably illustrated it in his lectures.

With respect to his proper academical department of the belles-lettres, he displayed the enlargement of his views in a set of Lectures on the Theory and History of Language, and on the Principles of Oratory and Criticism; in the latter of which, he successfully applied the Hartleian theory of association, to objects of taste. Although his graver pursuits did not allow him to cultivate the agreeable parts of literature as a practitioner, he sufficiently showed, by some light and playful efforts, that he would have been capable of excelling in this walk, had he given his attention to it. But he was too intent upon *things* to expend his regards upon *words*, and he remained contented with a style of writing accommodated to the great business of instruction, of which the characteristics were accuracy and perspicuity.

Fully as his time might seem occupied by the academical and literary employments above enumerated, he found means, by perpetual activity and indefatigable industry, to accomplish the first great work in natural philosophy, which laid a solid foundation for his fame in that department of human knowledge. Having long amused himself with an electrical machine, and taken an interest in the progress of discovery in that branch of physics, he was induced to undertake a History of Electricity, with an account of its present state. As the science was of late date, and all its facts and theories lay within a moderate compass of reading, he thought it a task not beyond his powers to effect completely what he proposed; although his plan included an extensive course of experiment of his own, to verify what had been done by others, and to clear up remaining doubts and obscurities. It appears from his preface, that, while engaged in this design, he had enjoyed the advantage of personal intercourse with some eminent philosophers, among whom he acknowledges as coadjutors, Drs. Watson and Franklin, and Mr. Canton. The work first appeared at Warrington, in 1767, 4to; and so well was it received, that it passed into a fifth edition, in 4to. in 1794. It is indeed an admirable model of scientific history: full without superfluity; clear, methodical, candid, and unaffected. Its original experiments are highly ingenious, and gave a foretaste of that fertility of contrivance and sagacity of observation which afterwards so much distinguished the author.

It may be proper in this place to speak of Dr. Priestley's general character as an experimental philosopher. No person in this class can be met with who engaged in his inquiries with a more pure and simple love of truth, detached from all private and selfish considerations of fame or advantage. Hence he was solicitous only that discoveries should be made, regardless by whom they were made: and he was placed far beyond all that petty jealousy and rivalry which has so often led to the suppression of hints from casual observations, till the proprietor should have made the most of them for himself. On the contrary, he was impatient till all engaged in similar pursuits should be put upon the track which appeared to him most likely to lead to successful investigation. Having no favourite theories to support, he admitted indifferently facts of all apparent tendencies; and felt not the least hesitation in renouncing an opinion hastily formed, for another, the result of maturer examination. He regarded the whole field of knowledge as common ground, to be cultivated by the united labour of individuals for the general benefit. In these respects he seems most to have resembled the excellent Stephen Hales, whom Haller justly entitles "*vir indefessus, ad inveniendum verum natus.*"

His connection with the Warrington academy ceased in 1768, when he accepted an invitation to officiate as pastor to a large and respectable congregation of protestant dissenters at Leeds. Considering himself now as more especially devoted to theology, he suffered that, which had always been his favourite object, to take the lead amidst his intellectual pursuits, though not to the exclusion of others.

From infancy his mind had been strongly impressed with devotional sentiments; and although he had widely deviated from the doctrinal opinions which he had first imbibed, yet all the pious ardour and religious zeal of the sect among whom he was educated remained undiminished. He likewise retained in full force the principles of a dissenter from the Establishment, and those ideas of congregational discipline which had become obsolete among many of the richer and more relaxed of the separatists. Numerous publications relative to these points soon marked his new residence. His "Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion" gave, in a popular and concise form, his system of divinity with its evidences. His "View of the Principles and Conduct of the Protestant Dissenters" exhibited his notions of the grounds of dissent and the proper character and policy of a religious sect; and a variety of controversial and polemic writings presented to the world his views of the Christian dispensation.

As a divine, if possible, still more than as a philosopher, *truth* was his sole aim, which he pursued with a more exalted ardour, in proportion to the greater importance of the subject. Naturally sanguine, and embracing the conclusions of his reason with a plenitude of conviction that excluded every particle of doubt, he inculcated his tenets with an earnestness limited by nothing but a sacred regard to the rights of private judgment in others as well as himself. The considerations of human prudence were nothing in his eye, nor did he admit the policy of introducing novelties of opinion by slow degrees, and endeavouring to conciliate a favourable hearing, by softening or suppressing what was most likely to shock prejudiced minds. He boldly and plainly uttered what he conceived to be the truth and the whole truth, secure, that by its own native strength it would in fine prevail, and thinking himself little responsible for any temporary evils that might be incurred during the interval. To adopt the beautiful and happy simile of one of his late vindicators, "he followed truth as a man who hawks, follows his sport; at full speed, straight forward, looking only upward, and regardless into what difficulties the chase may lead him."

As pure religion was the great end of Dr. Priestley's labours, so perfect freedom of discussion was the means; and since he was convinced that this could not be attained under the domination of powerful and jealous establishments, interested in maintaining the particular system on which they were founded, he was a warm and open enemy to all unions of ecclesiastical with political systems, however modified and limited. In this respect, as in various others, he differed from many of his dissenting brethren; and, while he was engaged in controversy with the Church, he had to sustain attacks from the opposite quarter. But warfare of this kind he never feared or avoided: it cost him little expense of time, and none of spirits; it even seemed as if such an exercise was salutary to his mental constitution.

Few readers of this sketch need be told that Dr. Priestley was at the head of the modern Unitarians; a sect, of which the leading tenet is the proper humanity of Christ, and which confines every species of religious worship and adoration to the One Supreme. If those who have charged him with infidelity meant any thing more than an inference from his avowed opinions on this head, and imagined that he intended more than he declared, and entertained a secret purpose of undermining the Christian Revelation, they have been guilty of a calumny from which the least exertion of candour and penetration would have preserved them. They might have perceived that he was one who laid open his whole soul on every subject in which he was engaged; and that zeal for Christianity, as a divine dispensation and the most valuable of all gifts bestowed upon the human kind, was his ruling passion.

The favourable reception of the *History of Electricity* had induced Dr. Priestley to adopt the grand design of pursuing the rise and progress of the other sciences, in a historical form; and much of his time at Leeds was occupied in his second work upon this plan, entitled *The History and present State of Discoveries relating to Vision, Light, and Colours*, which appeared in 2 vols. 4to. 1772. This is allowed to be a performance of great merit; possessing a lucid arrangement, and that clear, perspicuous view of his subject which it was the author's peculiar talent to afford. It failed, however, of attaining the popularity of his *History of Electricity*, chiefly because it was impossible to give adequate notions of many parts of the theory of optics without a more accurate acquaintance with mathematics than common readers can be supposed to possess. Perhaps, too, the writer himself was scarcely competent to explain the abstruser parts of this science. It proved to be the termination of his plan: but science was no loser by the circumstance; for the activity of his mind was turned from the consideration of the discoveries of others, to the attempt of making discoveries of his own, and nothing could be more brilliant than his success. We find that at this period he had begun those experiments upon air, which have given the greatest celebrity to his name as a natural philosopher.

In 1770, Dr. Priestley quitted Leeds for a situation as different as could well be imagined. His philosophical writings, and the recommendation of his friend Dr. Price, had made him so favourably known to the Earl of Shelburne (afterwards Marquis of Lansdown) that this nobleman, one of the very few in this country who have assumed the patronage of literature and science, made him such advantageous proposals for residence with him, that regard to his family would not permit them to be rejected. It was merely in the capacity of his Lordship's librarian, or rather, his literary and philosophical companion, in the hours that could be devoted to such pursuits, that Dr. Priestley became an inmate with him. The domestic tuition of Lord Shelburne's sons was already committed to a man of merit, and they received from Dr. Priestley no other instruction than that of some courses of experimental philosophy. During this period, his family resided at Calne, in Wiltshire, adjacent to Bow-wood, the country seat of Lord Shelburne. Dr. Priestley frequently accompanied his noble patron to London, and mixed at his house with several of the eminent characters of the time, by whom he was treated with the respect due to his talents and virtues. He also attended his Lordship in a visit to Paris, where he saw many of the most celebrated men of science and letters in that country; and he astonished them by his assertion of a firm belief in revealed religion, which had been presented to their minds in such colours, that they thought no man of sense could hesitate in rejecting it as an idle fable.

Whilst he was enjoying the advantages of this situation, in every assistance from books and a noble apparatus for the pursuit of experimental inquiry, he also appeared in the height of his fame as an acute metaphysician. In 1775, he published his *Examination of Dr. Reid on the Human Mind; Dr. Beattie on the Nature and Immutability of Truth; and Dr. Oswald's Appeal to Common Sense.* The purpose of this volume was to refute the new doctrine of *common sense,* employed as the criterion of truth by the metaphysicians of Scotland, and to prepare the way for the reception of the Hartleian theory of the human mind, which he was then engaged in presenting under a more popular and intelligible form. They who conceive Dr. Priestley to have been triumphant in argument on this occasion, agree in disapproving (as he himself did afterwards) the contempt and sarcasm with which he treated his antagonists, which they do not think excused by the air of arrogance and self-sufficiency assumed by these writers in their strictures upon other reasoners. But this was not the only instance in which he thought it allowable to enliven the dryness of controversy by strokes of ridicule. He never intentionally misrepresented either the arguments or the purposes of an opponent; but he measured the respect with which he treated him, by that which he felt for him in his own mind.

In his publication of Hartley's Theory he had expressed some doubts as to the common hypothesis, that man possesses a soul, or immaterial substance, totally distinct from his body. For this opinion he had undergone obloquy as a favourer of atheism; but as no personal imputation was of weight with him in the pursuit of what he thought to be the truth, he did not scruple in 1777, to publish *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit,* in which he gave a history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the soul, and openly supported the *material* system, which makes it homogeneous with the body. Perhaps, of all Dr. Priestley's deviations from received opinions, this has subjected him to the greatest odium, and has most startled the true friends of reason and free inquiry, on account of its supposed consequences. The natural proofs of a future state appear to be so much invalidated by the rejection of a separate principle, the seat of thought, which may escape from the perishing body to which it is temporarily united, that he seemed to have been employed in demolishing one of the great pillars upon which religion is founded. It is enough here to observe, that, in Dr. Priestley's mind, the deficiency of these natural proofs only operated as an additional argument in favour of revelation ; the necessity of which, to support the most important point of human belief, was thereby rendered more strikingly apparent. It may be added, that as he materialised spirit, so he, in some measure, spiritualised matter, by assigning to it penetrability and other subtle qualities.

At this time he also appeared in great force as the champion of the doctrine of philosophical necessity ; a doctrine not less obnoxious to many, on account of its supposed effects on morality, than the former. To him, however, it was the source (as he always asserted) of the highest satisfaction, both religious and moral ; and a number of his followers have found it, in like manner, compatible with all the best principles of human conduct. With his intimate friend, Dr. Price, whose opinions in both the last mentioned points were radically different from his, a correspondence relative to them took place, which was published in a volume, and affords a most pleasing example of debate, carried on with perfect urbanity, and every token of mutual respect and affection.

Such was the wonderful compass and versatility of his mind, that at this very period he was carrying on that course of discovery concerning aëriform bodies, which has rendered his name so illustrious among philosophical chemists. In the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1773, we find a paper containing "Observation on different Kinds of Air," by Dr. Priestley ; which obtained the honorary prize of Copley's medal. These were re-printed, with many important additions, in the first volume of his *Experiments and Observations on different Kinds of Air*, 8vo. 1774. A second volume of this work was published in 1775, and a third in 1777. To give the slightest view of the original matter is these volumes, would occupy more time and space than this sketch permits; but it may with justice be affirmed, that they added a greater mass of fact to the history of aëriform fluids than the united labours of all others employed upon the same subject. Some of the most striking of his discoveries were those of nitrous, and dephlogisticated, or pure, air; of the restoration of vitiated air by vegetation; of the influence of light on vegetables, and of the effects of respiration upon the blood. In these volumes he did not attempt theory or systematic arrangement, thinking that the knowledge of facts was not sufficiently advanced for that purpose; and he threw them out hastily as new matter occurred, in pursuance of his liberal principle already noticed, that fellow-labourers in matters of science should as soon as possible be apprised of discoveries which might put them in the track of making others.

The name of Priestley was by these publications spread through all the enlightened countries of Europe, and honours from scientific bodies in various parts were accumulated upon him. The votaries of physical science now, doubtless, flattered themselves, that the ardour of his powerful mind was durably fixed upon the advancement of natural philosophy and chemistry; but an intimation at the close of the last volume, of his intention to intermit those pursuits in order to engage in other speculative topics, sufficiently proved to all who knew, that experimental inquiries could occupy only a secondary place in his mind. These other and more favourite topics, were the metaphysical theories which have been already mentioned, and the theological discussions which he resumed with fresh zeal and industry. The continuation of his *Institutes of Religion*; his *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*; his *Harmony of the Evangelists*; and various tracts on moral and religious topics, marked his return to his former studies.

The term of his engagement with Lord Shelburne having expired, Dr. Priestley, with a pension for life of 150*l.* per annum, was at liberty to choose a new situation.

He gave the preference to the neighbourhood of the populous town of Birmingham, chiefly induced by the advantages it afforded, from the nature of its manufactures, to the pursuit of chemical experiments. It was also the residence of several men of science; among whom the names of Watt, Withering, Bolton, and Keir, are well known to the public. With these he was soon upon terms of friendly reciprocation of knowledge and mutual aid in research; and their *Lunarian Club* presented a constellation of talent which would not easily have been assembled even in the metropolis.

He had not long occupied his new habitation, before he was invited to undertake the office of pastor to a congregation of Dissenters in Birmingham, upon which he entered with great satisfaction towards the close of 1780. He found a society cordially attached to his person and doctrines; and he merited their esteem by the most assiduous performance of all the pastoral duties. Some of the most important of his theological works soon issued from the Birmingham press. Of these were his *Letters to Bishop Newcome, on the Duration of Christ's Ministry;* and his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity;* afterwards followed by his *History of Early Opinions.* Controversies upon theological topics multiplied around him, to all of which he paid the attention they seemed to require. The warm disputes which took place on occasion of the applications of the Dissenters for relief from the disabilities and penalties of the Corporation and Test Acts, supplied a new subject of contest into which he could not forbear to enter, both as a friend to toleration in general, and as one of the body aggrieved. His hostility to the Establishment became more decided, and he *appealed to the people* on the points of difference, in his *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham,* written with much force, but with his usual disregard of caution.

Little has hitherto been said of the political exertions of Dr. Priestley, which, indeed, form no conspicuous part of his literary life. He had displayed his attachment to freedom by his *Essay on the first Principles of Government,* and by an anonymous pamphlet on the state of public liberty in this country; and had shown a warm interest in the cause of America at the time of its unfortunate rupture with the mother country. The French revolution was an event which could scarcely fail of being contemplated by him with satisfaction. His sanguine hopes saw in it the dawn of light and liberty over Europe; and he particularly expected from it the eventual downfal of all establishments inimical to the spread of truth. Such expectations he was at no pains to conceal; and as parties now began to take their decided stations, and to be inspired with all the usual rancour of opponents in civil contests, he was naturally rendered a prominent mark of party hatred.

In this state of mutual exasperation, the celebration of the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastille, by a public dinner, on July 14th, 1791, at which Dr. Priestley *was not present*, gave the signal of those savage riots, which have thrown lasting disgrace on the town of Birmingham, and in some degree on the national character. Amid the conflagration of houses of worship and private dwellings, Dr. Priestley was the great object of popular rage; his house, library, manuscripts, and apparatus, were made a prey to the flames; he was hunted like a proclaimed criminal, and experienced not only the furious outrages of a mob, but the most unhandsome treatment from some who ought to have sustained the parts of gentlemen, and friends of peace and order.

It would be painful to dwell upon these scenes. Suffice it to say, that he was driven for ever from his favourite residence; that his losses were very inadequately compensated; and that he passed some time as a wanderer, till an invitation to succeed Dr. Price in a congregation at Hackney gave him a new settlement. This was rendered more interesting to him by a connection with the new dissenting-college established at that place. His mind, by its native elasticity, recovered from the shock of his cruel losses, and he resumed his usual labours.

This was, however, far from being a season of tranquillity. Parties ran high, and events were daily taking place calculated to agitate the mind, and inspire varied emotions of tumultuous expectation. Dr. Priestley, however he might be regarded by the friends of government, had no reason to entertain apprehensions for his personal safety on the part of authority; but he was conscious that he lay under a load of public odium and suspicion, and he was perpetually harassed by the petty malignity of bigotry. Having so lately been the victim of a paroxysm of popular rage, he could not be perfectly easy in the vicinity of a vast metropolis, where any sudden impulse given to the tumultuous mass might bring irresistible destruction upon the heads of those who should be pointed out as objects of vengeance. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that he looked towards an asylum in a country to which he had always shown a friendly attachment, and which was in possession of all the blessings of civil and religious liberty. Some family reasons also enforced this choice of a new situation. He took leave of his native country in 1794, and embarked for North America. He carried with him the sincere regrets of a great number of venerating and affectionate friends and admirers; and his departure, while celebrated as a triumph by unfeeling bigots, was lamented by the moderate and impartial, as a kind of stigma on the country which, by its ill treatment, had expelled a citizen whom it might enrol among its proudest boasts.

Northumberland, a town in the inland parts of the state of Pennsylvania, was the place in which he fixed his residence. It was selected on account of the purchase of landed property in its neighbourhood; otherwise, its remoteness from the sea ports, its want of many of the comforts of civilised life, and of all the helps to studious and scientific pursuit, rendered it a peculiarly undesirable abode for one of Dr. Priestley's habits and employments. The loss of his excellent wife, and of a very promising son, together with repeated attacks of disease and other calamities, severely tried the fortitude and resignation of this christian philosopher; but he had within him what rendered him superior to all external events, and pious serenity was the settled temper of his soul.

In America he was received, if not with the ardour of sympathy and admiration, yet with general respect; nor were the angry contests of party able lastingly to deprive him of the esteem due to his character. If he had any sanguine hopes of diffusing his religious principles over the new continent; or if his friends expected that the brilliancy of his philosophical reputation should place him in a highly conspicuous light among a people yet in the infancy of mental culture, such expectations were certainly disappointed. He was, however, heard as a preacher by some of the most distinguished members of Congress; and he was offered, but declined, the place of chemical professor at Philadelphia. It became his great object to enable himself in his retirement at Northumberland to renew that course of philosophical experiment, and especially that train of theological writing, which had occupied so many of the best years of his life. By indefatigable pains he got together a valuable apparatus and well furnished library, and cheerfully returned to his former employments. By many new experiments on the constitution of airs, he became more and more fixed in his belief of the phlogistic theory, and in his opposition to the new French chemical system, of which he lived to be the sole opponent of note. The results of several of his inquiries on these topics were given, both in separate publications, and in the *American Philosophical Transactions.* A number of pamphlets on different occasions of controversy fell from his pen; and by his comparisons of the Jewish with the Mahometan and Hindoo religions, and of the characters of Christ and Socrates, he endeavoured to strengthen the bulwarks of revelation. The liberal contributions of his friends in England enabled him to commence the printing of two extensive works, on which he was zealously bent, a *Church History,* and an *Exposition of the Scriptures;* and through the progress of his final decline he unremittingly urged their completion.

The circumstances attending the close of his useful and exemplary life are related with such interesting simplicity in the following article of the *Philadelphia Gazette,* that every one must receive pleasure from reading the narrative entire.

"Since his illness at Philadelphia, in the year 1801, he never regained his former good state of health. His complaint was constant indigestion, and a difficulty of swallowing food of any kind. But during this period of general debility, he was busily employed in printing his *Church History,* and the first volume of his *Notes on the Scriptures,* and in making new and original experiments. During this period, likewise, he wrote his pamphlet of *Jesus and Socrates compared,* and re-printed his *Essay on Phlogiston.*

"From about the beginning of November, 1803, to the middle of January, 1804, his complaint grew more serious; yet, by judicious medical treatment, and strict attention to diet, he, after some time, seemed, if not gaining strength, at least not getting worse; and his friends fondly hoped that his health would continue to improve as the season advanced. He, however, considered his life as very precarious. Even at this time, besides his miscellaneous reading, which was at all times very extensive, he read through all the works quoted in his *Comparison of the different Systems of Grecian Philosophers with Christianity;* composed that work, and transcribed the whole of it in less than three months; so that he has left it ready for the press. During this period he composed, in one day, his *Second Reply* to Dr. Linn.

"In the last fortnight of January, his fits of indigestion became more alarming, his legs swelled, and his weakness increased. Within two days of his death he became so weak, that he could walk but a little way, and that with great difficulty. For some time he found himself unable to speak; but, on recovering a little, he told his friends, that he had never felt more pleasantly during his whole life time, than during the time he was unable to speak. He was fully sensible that he had not long to live, yet talked with cheerfulness to all who called on him. In the course of the day he expressed his thankfulness at being permitted to die quietly in his family, without pain, and with every convenience and comfort that he could wish for. He dwelt upon the peculiarly happy situation in which it had pleased the Divine Being to place him in life, and the great advantage he had enjoyed in the acquaintance and friendship of some of the best and wisest men of the age in which he lived, and the satisfaction he derived from having led an useful as well as happy life. He this day gave directions about printing the remainder of his *Notes on Scripture,* (a work, in the completion of which he was much interested) and looked over the first sheet of the third volume, after it was corrected by those who were to attend to its completion, and expressed his satisfaction at the manner of its being executed.

"On Sunday, the 5th, he was much weaker, but sat up in an arm chair for a few minutes. He desired that John, chap. xi. might be read to him: he stopped the reader at the 45th verse, dwelt for some time on the advantage he had derived from reading the Scriptures daily, and recommended this practice, saying, that it would prove a source of the purest pleasure. 'We shall all (said he), meet finally, we only require different degrees of discipline suited to our different tempers, to prepare us for final happiness.' Mr. —— coming into his room, he said 'You see, Sir, I am still living.' Mr. —— observed, 'that he would always live.' 'Yes, I *believe* I *shall;* we shall meet again in another and a better world.' He said this with great animation, laying hold of Mr. ——'s hand in both his own. After evening prayers, when his grand-children were brought to his bed side, he spoke to them separately, and exhorted them to continue to love each other, &c. 'I am going (added he) to sleep as well as you, for death is only a good long sound sleep in the grave, and we shall meet again.'

"On Monday morning, the 9th of February, on being asked how he did, he answered in a faint voice, that he had no pain, but appeared fainting away gradually. About eight o'clock, he desired to have three pamphlets which had been looked out by his directions the evening before. He then dictated as clearly and distinctly as he had ever done in his life, the additions and alterations which he wished to have made in each. Mr.—— took down the substance of what he said, which was read to him. He observed, 'Sir, you have put in your own language, I wish it to be *mine.*' He then repeated over again, nearly word for word, what he had before said, and when it was transcribed, and read over to him, he said, 'That is right, I have now done.'

"About half an hour after, he desired that he might be removed to a cot. About ten minutes after he was removed to it, he died; but breathed his last so easily, that those who were sitting close to him did not immediately perceive it. He had put his hand to his face, which prevented them from observing it."

This was indeed "the death of the righteous!" and it is presumed, that no one possessed of generous and tender feelings, how much soever differing in opinion from the deceased, will refrain from embalming his memory with a tear, and crying "Peace be with him!"

In Dr. Priestley's mental constitution were united ardour and vivacity of intellect, with placidity and mildness of temper. With a zeal for the propagation of truth, that would have carried him through fire and water, he joined a calm patience, an unruffled serenity, which rendered him proof against all obstructions and disappointments. It has been suggested, that a man so much in earnest, and so vigorous in controversial warfare, could not fail of being a persecutor, should his party gain the superiority: but this was an erroneous supposition. Not only were the rights of private judgment rendered sacred to him by every principle of his understanding, but his heart would not have suffered him to have injured his bitterest enemy. He was naturally disposed to cheerfulness, and when his mind was not occupied with serious thoughts, could unbend, with even playful ease and negligence, in the private circle of friends. In large and mixed companies he usually spoke little. In the domestic relations of life he was uniformly kind and affectionate. His parental feelings (alas! how keenly were they excited!) were those of the tenderest and best of fathers. Not malice itself could ever fix a stain on his private conduct, or impeach his integrity.

Such was the man who adds one more imperishable name to the illustrious dead of his country.

(G. p. 143.)

MEMOIR
OF
DR. CURRIE.

JAMES CURRIE, M. D. was born at Kirkpatrick-Fleming in Dumfriesshire, on May 31st, 1756. His father was the established minister of that parish, whence he afterwards removed to that of Middlebie. Dr. Currie was an only son: of six sisters, two alone are now surviving. He received the rudiments of learning at the parish school of his native place, whence he was transferred to the grammar school of Dumfries, one of the most reputable seminaries of the kind in Scotland. His original destination was for a commercial life, and he passed some years of his youth in Virginia in a mercantile station. Disliking this profession, and unwilling to be a witness of the impending troubles in the American colonies, he quitted that country in 1776, and in the following year commenced a course of medical study at the university of Edinburgh, which occupied him almost without interruption for three years. A prospect of an appointment in the medical staff of the army, which would not admit of the usual delay of an Edinburgh graduation, induced him to take the degree of Doctor of Physic at Glasgow. He arrived, however, in London too late for the expected post; but still determining to go abroad, he had taken his passage in a ship for Jamaica, when a severe indisposition prevented his sailing, and entirely changed his lot in life. He renounced his first intention; and, after some consideration respecting an eligible settlement, he fixed upon the commercial and rapidly increasing town of Liverpool, which became his residence from the year 1781.

The liberal and enlightened character which has long distinguished many of the leading inhabitants of that place, rendered it a peculiarly favourable theatre for the display of the moral and intellectual endowments for which Dr. Currie was conspicuous, and he soon rose into general esteem. Indeed, it was not possible, even upon a casual acquaintance, for a judge of mankind to fail of being struck by his manly urbanity of behaviour, by the elegance and variety of his conversation, by the solid sense and sagacity of his remarks, and by the tokens of a feeling heart, which graced and dignified the qualities of his understanding. No man was ever more highly regarded by his friends; no physician ever inspired more confidence and attachment in his patients.

In 1783, Dr. Currie made a very desirable matrimonial connection with Lucy, the daughter of William Wallace, Esq. an Irish merchant in Liverpool. Of this marriage a numerous and amiable family was the fruit, by which his name promises to be worthily perpetuated. His professional employment rapidly increased; he was elected one of the physicians of the Infirmary, and took his station among the distinguished characters of the place of his residence.

His first appearance from the press was on occasion of the lamented death of his intimate friend Dr. Bell, a young physician of great hopes settled at Manchester. His elegant and interesting tribute to the memory of this person was published, in 1785, in the first volume of the *Transactions of the Manchester Philosophical and Literary Society*, of which they were both members. He was elected a member of the London Medical Society in 1790, and communicated to it a paper "On Tetanus and Convulsive Disorders," published in the third volume of its *Memoirs*. In 1792, he became a fellow of the Royal Society. A very curious and instructive "Account of the remarkable effects of a Shipwreck," communicated by him to that body, was published in the *Philosophical Transactions* of that year.

The mind of Dr. Currie was not made to be confined to a narrow range of speculation, and nothing interesting to human society was indifferent to, or unconsidered by him. The war with France consequent to its great revolutionary struggle, was regarded by him, as it was by many other philanthropists, with disapprobation, with respect as well to its principles, as to its probable effect on the happiness of both countries. A pamphlet which appeared in 1793, under the title of *A Letter Commercial and Political addressed to the Right Hon. William Pitt, by Jasper Wilson, Esq.* was generally understood to proceed from his pen. The energy of language, the weight of argument, and the extent of information displayed in it, drew upon it a large share of notice. It soon attained a second edition, and various answers attested the degree of importance attached to it in the public estimation. One of the respondents took the unwarrantable liberty of directly addressing Dr. Currie, in print, as the author, at the same time affecting on very slender grounds the familiarity of an intimate acquaintance. It can scarcely be doubted that this infringement of the rules of liberal controversy was prompted by the malignant purpose of exposing Dr. Currie to popular odium, and injuring him in his profession. He understood it thus, but the particular line of his principal connections, together with the solid basis of the character he had established, enabled him to despise the efforts of party malice.

The greater distinction a professional man acquires from pursuits not belonging to his profession, the more necessary it becomes for him to bring himself into notice as a successful votary of the art or science to which his primary attention is due. Of this point Dr. Currie was very far from being neglectful. To those who employed him he was abundantly known as a skilful and sedulous practitioner, and the medical papers he had already published gave him reputation among his brethren. This reputation was widely extended and raised to an eminent degree by a publication which first appeared in October, 1797, entitled, *Medical Reports on the Effects of Water cold and warm as a Remedy in Febrile Diseases; with Observations on the Nature of Fever, and on the Effects of Opium, Alcohol, and Inanition.* The practice of affusion of cold water in fevers, which is the leading topic in this work, was suggested to the author by Dr. Wright's narrative in the *London Medical Journal* of his successful treatment of a fever in a homeward bound ship from Jamaica. Dr. Currie copied and greatly extended it, and investigated the principles by which its use should be directed and regulated. He discovered that the safety and advantage of the application of cold was proportionate to the existing augmentation of the animal heat, and he found the thermometer a very valuable instrument to direct the practitioner's judgment in febrile cases. He may, therefore, be considered as the principal author of a practice which has already been attended with extraordinary success in numerous instances, and bids fair to prove one of the greatest medical improvements in modern times. The work, which contained many ingenious speculations and valuable observations, was very generally read and admired. A new volume was added to it in 1804, consisting of much interesting matter on different topics, especially in confirmation of the doctrine and practice of the former volume respecting cold affusion. The free and successful employment of this remedy in the scarlatina was one of its most important articles. The author had the satisfaction of receiving numerous acknowledgments of the benefit derived from his instructions both in private and in naval and military practice. He himself was so much convinced of the utility of the methods he recommended, that a revision of the whole work for a new edition was one of the latest labours of his life.

Dr. Currie might now, without danger to his professional character, indulge his inclination for the ornamental parts of literature; and an occasion offered in which he had the happiness of rendering his taste and his benevolence equally conspicuous. On a visit to his native country in 1792, he had become personally acquainted with that rustic son of genius *Robert Burns*. This extraordinary but unfortunate man having, at his death, left his family in great indigence, a subscription was made in Scotland for their immediate relief, and at the same time a design was formed of publishing an edition of his printed works and remains for their emolument. Mr. Syme of Ryedale, an old and intimate friend of Dr. Currie, strongly urged him to undertake the office of editor; and to this request, in which other friends of the poet's memory concurred, he could not withhold his acquiescence, notwithstanding his multiplied engagements. In 1800, he published in 4 volumes, 8vo. *The Works of Robert Burns, with an Account of his Life, and a Criticism on his Writings: to which are prefixed some Observations on the Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry.* These volumes were a rich treat to the lovers of poetry and elegant literature; and Dr. Currie's part in them, as a biographer and critic, was greatly admired, as well for beauty of style as for liberality of sentiment and sagacity of remark. If any objection was made to him as an editor on account of unnecessary extension of the materials, the kind purpose for which the publication was undertaken pleaded his excuse with all who are capable of feeling its force. Its success fully equalled the most sanguine expectations.—Repeated editions produced a balance of profit which formed a little fortune for the destitute family; and Dr. Currie might congratulate himself on having been one of the most effectual friends of departed genius that the annals of British poetry record.

Every plan for promoting liberal studies and the improvement of the human mind had in him a zealous and active supporter. In the formation of those literary institutions which have done so much honour to the town of Liverpool, he, with his intimate and congenial friend, the distinguished author of the Lives of Lorenzo de' Medici and Leo X., stood among the foremost; and their names were always conjoined when mention was made of the worth and talents which dignified their place of abode. No cultivated traveller visited Liverpool without soliciting Dr. Currie's acquaintance, and his reception of those introduced to him was eminently polite and hospitable.

In his Life of Burns, remarking upon that partiality for their own country which appears almost universally in the natives of Scotland, he has observed, that "it differs in its character according to the character of the different minds in which it is found; in some appearing a selfish prejudice, in others a generous affection." He was himself a striking exemplification of this fact; for the sentiment in him was principally shown in the kindness with which he received all his young countrymen who came recommended to his notice, and the zeal with which he exerted himself to procure them situations suited to their qualifications. Indeed, a disposition in general to favour the progress of deserving young persons was a prominent feature in his character. He loved to converse with them, and mingled valuable information with cheering encouragement.

Though externally of a vigorous frame of body, Dr. Currie had a predisposition to those complaints which usually shorten life; and in the year 1784 he had experienced a pulmonary attack of an alarming nature, from which he was extraordinarily recovered by the use of horse-exercise, as related by himself in his case inserted in the second volume of Dr. Darwin's Zoonomia. He was, however, seldom long free from threatenings of a return, and his health began visibly to decline in the early part of 1804. In the summer of that year he took a journey to Scotland, where among other sources of gratification he had that of witnessing the happy effects of his kindness on the family of Burns. His letters on this occasion were delightful displays of benevolence rejoicing in its work. He returned with some temporary amendment; but alarming symptoms soon returned, and in November he found it necessary to quit the climate and business of Liverpool. How severely his departure was felt by those who had been accustomed to commit their health and that of their families to his skill and tenderness, can only be estimated by those who have experienced a similar loss. He spent the winter alternately at Clifton and Bath; and in the month of March appeared to himself in a state of convalescence which justified his taking a house in Bath, and commencing the practice of his profession. From the manner in which his career opened, there could be no doubt that it would have proved eminently successful; but the concluding scene was hastily approaching. As a last resource he went in August to Sidmouth, where, after much suffering, which he bore with manly fortitude and pious resignation, he expired on August 31st, 1805, in the 50th year of his age. His disease was ascertained to be a great enlargement and flaccidity of the heart, accompanied with remarkable wastings of the left lung but without ulceration, tubercle, or abscess.

Few men have left the world with a more amiable and estimable character, proved in every relation of life public and domestic. In his professional conduct he was upright, liberal, and honourable, with much sensibility for his patients without the affectation of it; fair and candid towards his brethren of the faculty; and though usually decided in his opinion, yet entirely free from arrogance or dogmatism. His behaviour was singularly calculated to convert rivals into friends; and some of those who regarded him with the greatest esteem and affection have been the persons who divided practice with him. To his character in this point a most honourable testimony has been given in a short article inserted in a Bath newspaper by the worthy and learned Dr. Falconer. His powers of mind were of the highest rank, equally fitted for action and speculation: his morals were pure; his principles exalted. His life, though much too short to satisfy the wishes of his friends and family, was long enough for signal usefulness and for lasting fame.

(II. p. 145.)

MEMOIR

OF

MR. WALKER.

THE Rev. GEORGE WALKER, F. R. S. whose death has been sincerely lamented by a number of affectionate relatives and friends, was born about the year 1734, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in which town his father was a respectable tradesman. He was sent at an early age to the free-school of his native place, then under the care of the Rev. Dr. Moises. In this seminary he gave very early tokens of an uncommon capacity for literary acquirements; and passed some years with the advantage that might be expected under a master whose professional reputation was very high, and whose success in instruction has been proved by the eminence to which several of his pupils have risen, among whom may be enumerated the present Lord Chancellor, and his brother Sir Wm. Scott. It may be interesting to mention that Mr. Walker, four years before his death, visited his first venerable instructor, then in extreme old age, who gave him a most cordial reception, and spoke of him as one whom he had a pride in numbering among his scholars, and who had fully realised his expectation concerning his future proficiency.

At the age of ten, he was sent to his uncle, the Rev. Thomas Walker,* a dissenting minister of great respectability at Durham, who had hitherto directed his education, and continued to superintend it, with the view of fitting him for his own profession. In this city he pursued his classical studies in the grammar-school, then flourishing under a head-master of great abilities, whom his scholar always recollected with a kind of enthusiastic veneration. He was thoroughly grounded in the Greek and Latin languages, and was, besides furnished with much general knowledge from his uncle's instructions, when he was removed to the university of Edinburgh. He was there a pupil of that eminent mathematician Dr. Matthew Stewart, from whom he imbibed that pure and elegant taste in mathematical speculations, by which both tutor and pupil have been so much distinguished. He did not, however, find this school favourable to those theological studies on which his mind was principally bent; and he removed to the university of Glasgow, then in reputation for its lectures in divinity and moral philosophy, and there completed his education.

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* This gentleman, though highly esteemed among his brethren, was known to the public only by a single sermon preached at the opening of the new meeting at Wakefield in the year 1752.

Mr. Walker's first settlement as a minister was at Durham, about the year 1756, as successor to his uncle, who had removed to Leeds. He continued there about seven years, and then accepted an invitation to Great Yarmouth. Of the general respect and esteem which he enjoyed in that place during a residence of several years, there are many still living witnesses. Few men, indeed, have been better qualified to shine and interest in socisiety. Well acquainted with all the best authors, especially in history, ancient and modern; accustomed to free and enlarged discussion of topics of the greatest importance to mankind; and gifted with a warm and copious eloquence; he attracted general notice and deference in conversation. At the same time, his thoroughly amiable and benevolent disposition, his cheerful, open, and companionable nature, and his unaffected simplicity, endeared him in an uncommon degree to all within the sphere of his intimacy. He married at Yarmouth in 1772, and not long after removed to Warrington, as mathematical tutor in the academy at that place.

To the affection and regard which he inspired in the breasts of all with whom he was connected in that institution, I can bear a heartfelt testimony; and I had the happiness of being one of the social circle to which he imparted so much animation. He had, unfortunately, too much cause to be dissatisfied by the failure of the moderate expectations of emolument which were held out to him on his removal. I know not that blame was imputable to any individual on this account; but, in fact, the alma mater of Warrington was ever a niggardly recompenser of the distinguished abilities and virtues which were enlisted in her service. Mr. Walker, while a single man, had exercised a prudent economy, which had enabled him to collect a valuable library, and also to indulge his taste for prints, of which he possessed a number of specimens from the early Italian and other masters, purchased with judgment, and at a price greatly inferior to that which they at present bear. As a house-keeper, his inclination led him to a boundless hospitality; and though his personal habits of life were simple and unexpensive, in the calls of charity and of social entertainment he knew no stint. At what period he became a fellow of the Royal Society, I am uninformed; but he was so when he printed at Warrington his *Doctrine of the Sphere*, a 4to. volume, published in 1775, with many plates of a peculiar construction, and which cost much labour. This is considered by the best judges as a very complete treatise on the subject, and an example of the purest method of geometrical demonstration.

He removed, about the beginning of 1775, to Nottingham, to occupy the station of one of the ministers of the High Pavement meeting. This town was the place of his longest residence, and the scene of his principal activity and usefulness as a *public character*. Mr. Walker had long been a deep thinker upon political subjects, and had imbibed, with all the ardour and decision of his character, those principles of civil and religious liberty which are by many regarded as fundamental to a free constitution, and of the highest importance to human society. Nottingham is one of the few places in this kingdom in which such principles are allied to municipal power and magistracy; he had therefore a large field for extending the influence of his knowledge and eloquence over public assemblies. As the period of his residence there comprehended the whole of the American war, the efforts made for the reform of parliament, the first applications for the abolition of the slave trade, and the discussion of various other important points,—his advice and assistance were frequently called for in the political measures adopted by the town and corporation of Nottingham; and nearly all the petitions which at different times were thence addressed to the king and the house of commons were the productions of his pen, and were marked with his characteristic energy of language and sentiment. One of these, the petition for recognising American independence, made such an impression on the mind of Mr. Burke, then a distinguished champion of the same cause, that in the debate consequent upon it he declared he had rather have been the author of that piece than of all his own compositions. Although, in the contest of parties, the zeal and warmth of Mr. Walker necessarily gave much occasional offence to persons in opposite interests, yet the kindness of his heart, and the even playful ease and cheerfulness of his social conversation, softened animosity, and would not permit those to hate the man, who hated his principles. It is needless to add, that by those who agreed with him in sentiments he was beloved and valued to the borders of enthusiasm.

The death of some of his most intimate friends, and the prospect of extending his usefulness in a different sphere of action, induced him, after a residence of 24 years at Nottingham, to accept the post of theological tutor and superintendant of the dissenting academy at Manchester, which was in some degree the successor of that at Warrington, though upon a more contracted scale. Although, in point of extent of knowledge, and disinterested zeal in performing the duties of his office, Mr. Walker was excellently qualified for such a situation, yet it must be confessed that an habitual want of punctuality, and a forgetfulness of engagements occasioned by the ardour with which he entered into any present subject of meditation or discussion, were unfavourable to the maintenance of that order and discipline which are essential to an institution for education. His advancing years likewise rendered the labours of such a charge more onerous to him; and at the same time the institution was languishing under some external causes of decline. At length, the whole burthen of theological, classical, and mathematical tuition having fallen upon him, he found himself unequal to the task, and finally resigned his office. It should be added, that during his residence at Manchester, he was an active member of the Literary and Philosophical Society of that Place, before which he read several papers, and which, upon the decease of Dr. Percival, chose him for its president.

His final removal was to the village of Wavertree, near Liverpool, which situation was selected by him on account of its vicinity to some warm and congenial friends, with whom he hoped to spend the tranquil evening of his days. His principal employment here was to revise and put in order his various compositions both printed and manuscript. He had published several single sermons on particular occasions while at Nottingham, and had printed two volumes of sermons in 1790. These were all distinguished by singular spirit and vivacity of expression, and a manly, fervid, and original cast of thought. He had also written an *Appeal to the People of England* upon the subject of the test laws, which was considered as a piece of peculiar excellence by that liberal and enlightened statesman, the late Mr. Fox. Besides his work on the Sphere, he had published the first part of a *Treatise of Conic Sections,* a work worthy of his mathematical reputation.* The re-publication of his Sermons, with the addition of two more volumes, and also of two volumes of *Philosophical Essays,* was an important concern which brought him to London in the spring of the year 1807.

Soon after his arrival I was favoured with a visit from him, of great cordiality, in which he pathetically observed that we two were the only remaining relics of the Warrington academical society. Indeed, it has been my lot, since the year 1797, to lament in private, and publicly to commemorate, three distinguished members of the same fraternity, (Dr. Enfield, Dr. Priestley, and Mr. Wakefield) besides the excellent person who now employs my pen. Mr. Walker appeared to me not at all declined in health and spirits since last I saw him, though with some marks of increased age. He himself, however, was probably conscious of more debility than was apparent; for he dropped several expressions denoting that he did not expect long to survive. He was soon after attacked with what seemed to be a severe lumbago, which rendered motion extremely painful, and fixed him, at first, to his chair, and then to his bed. His recollection at the same time became sensibly impaired, and, at length, totally left him. Under these symptoms he rapidly sunk; and on the morning of April 21st, after an act of fervent prayer, expressed by his folded hands when the power of articulation was nearly gone, he calmly resigned his soul to his Maker. From the house of his kind friend and former pupil, Mr. Smith of Draper's-hall with whom he had been a guest, his remains were carried, with a respectable attendance of friends, for interment in Bunhill-fields. He left a widow, together with one son, and a daughter married to Sir George Cayley, Bart. of Brompton-house, near Scarborough.

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* The following remarkable circumstance relative to this work has been related to me by W. Frend, Esq. When Mr. Frend was in Germany, he accidentally met with a copy of a Treatise on Conic Sections, by Father Boscovich, with which he was so much pleased, that on his return he made it the foundation of the lectures on that subject which he gave as a public tutor in the University of Cambridge. When he lost that situation, he presented his mathematical papers to his successor, the Rev. Mr. Newton, who drew up a work on Conic Sections upon the plan thus derived from Boscovich. This was offered to the university press just at the time when Mr. Walker presented to the curators an original work on that subject for the same purpose. This was found so much to resemble the other (though Mr. W. had certainly never seen the work of Boscovich,) that the university thought it superfluous to print both, and naturally gave the preference to that of its own member.

I cannot close this account without adding a sketch of Mr. Walker's character from the masterly hand of a friend who resembled him in several striking features, the late Gilbert Wakefield. In his *Memoirs*, after giving a just estimate of Mr. Walker's intellectual talents and attainments, he thus proceeds: "But these qualifications, great and estimable as they are, constitute but a mean portion of his praise. Art thou looking, reader! like Æsop in the fable, for a MAN? Dost thou want an intrepid spirit in the cause of truth, liberty, and virtue—an undeviating rectitude of action—a boundless hospitality—a mind infinitely superior to every sensation of malice and resentment—a breast susceptible of the truest friendship, and overflowing with the milk of human kindness—an ardour, an enthusiasm, in laudable pursuits, characteristic of magnanimity—an unwearied assiduity, even to his own hindrance, in public service? My experience can assure thee, that thy pursuit may cease, thy doubts be banished, and thy hopes realised: for this is the man."

To such praise, which honours equally the giver and the receiver, it would be impertinent to make any other addition than a testimony of its justice.

THE END.

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